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THE DIVIDED LEGACY

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Correspondence

Trilogy tribute

Winston-Salem, N.C.

To the Editors: We found the resurrection trilogy in your issue of April 5 beautiful and meaningful, especially the Melkite Rites of Easter portrayed in "He Tramples Death" by Dr. F. Ellen Weaver. There is a special depth of joy, a sense of immediacy, revealed in the prayers and procession described, with a spirit of hope and renewed faith in all that resurrection means to a pilgrim church. We wish that next Easter might find us sharing the worship of that Eastern Rite congregation.

MR. & MRS. ROBERT C. ESTES

Missing the mark

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: For the record, I would like to respond briefly to Dr. George Irani's letter of April 19 on my article "The Pope and Israel [January 11]." Both Irani and Fr. Edward Flannery [March 22] (from different points of view) wish to underline the second sentence of the pope's 1980 homily (not "speech") at Otranto, even though my article did specifically refer to it. The problem I would have with both of their interpretations of the pope's words is that they posit on the text a *causal* link between the birth of the State of Israel and the plight of Arab Palestinian refugees when, in fact, the pope himself notes only a temporal one: "*at the same time* a sad condition was created . . ." This point is admittedly a technical one. But from the important evidence adduced in Flannery's letter it would seem to me to have been very wise on the pope's part to have refrained as he did from entering the highly complex historical question of who did what to whom to "cause" the movement of a minority of the Arab community from the boundaries of the newly created state. In any event, those Arabs that remained have certainly fared much better in Israel than their counterparts who placed themselves in the hands of Arab governments, which still refuse them even basic citizenship.

Irani's second point depends on whether the *sole* form of *de jure* or *de facto* recognition is that of the exchange of ambassadors on the highest level. If that were so, then one would have to conclude that the Holy See did not "recognize the existence" of the U.S. for close to a century (and of England for a much longer period) and still "refuses to recognize" quite a number of palpably existing countries today. Such a conclusion, I would affirm, does not reflect the subtleties of international law.

Irani's final point misses the mark entirely. The Holy See does *not* call for an "internationally guaranteed, special *status*" for Jerusalem as it did prior to 1967. Rather it calls for a "special statute" (*per peculiare statutum*), internationally guaranteeing the religious plurality of the city; "status" and "statute," while similar in sound, are legally entirely distinct concepts, as my article attempted to explain. EUGENE J. FISHER

An accurate picture

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: I read the article by Father Edward Braxton ["Authentically Black, Truly Catholic, February 8] and have enthusiastically passed it on to many leaders in my constituency here in the Washington Archdiocese, and to my colleagues who work in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center.

This is one of the first thorough efforts to write a "State of Black Catholic America, 1984." Father Braxton, has, I think, touched the heart of the matter and gives an accurate picture of us as black and Catholic. His thoughts are provocative at times, but speak truth.

Above all, his message is a clear challenge for all who serve the black Catholic communities, and to us as leadership, to enable, challenge, and raise up indigenous leadership in the mission of the church. JACQUELINE E. WILSON

Yes, Catholics sang

Boston, Mass.

To the Editors: I would be less than candid if I did not admit a vested interest in the discussion of contemporary Catholic hymnody by Thomas Day and his correspondents [March 8 and May 3]. I work full time as director of liturgy and music at the Paulist Center in Boston. I am also a composer of contemporary hymnody. Nonetheless, having admitted my particular interest and vantage point, I would still like to respond to several of the points raised.

Professor Day compares recent liturgical compositions to the devotional hymns popular in the earlier part of the century: "The spirit of the old kitsch novena hymns lives on, stronger than ever, in the parish folk Mass, in the gentle pieces by singing priests and nuns, and in a large number of newer hymns. . . . That same sweet sentimentality, that same tender emotionalism of the old kitsch hymns is experiencing a revival today."

As one who grew up in New York in the fifties, I can still remember my earliest introduction to church music largely in terms of the Monday Miraculous Medal novena and Sunday afternoon public rosary and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. I am especially reminded of these boyhood memories when at workshops I am told, "Catholics just don't like to sing." I usually point out that Catholics sang, and sang well, but not at Mass. I would like to suggest that Catholic devotional hymnody of the period, however mawkish and sentimental, did not privatize Catholic life but rather tended to sustain a sense of community and collective spirituality.

In one of the great ironies of liturgical history, the Mass had long since become

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TAX REFORM: DON'T JUMP YET

IT HAS OFTEN BEEN SAID that only two things are certain in this life: taxes, and the need for tax reform. President Reagan struck a deep, responsive vein when he called for the latter in his speech of May 28. With salesman's astuteness, he summed it up with a proven advertising phrase: "Go for it!" Despite the rhetorical magic, we would do well to pause before we jump. What indeed are the wisdom, structure, and likely outcome of the president's plan?

In a Brookings Institute report this January, Joseph A. Pechman stated that "the distribution of income *after* taxes and transfers was more unequal in 1985 than in 1966." Simply put, the tax system has become less progressive in the last twenty years. This fact seems to have been readily grasped by the taxpayers' collective unconscious, and President Reagan has rightly articulated it. But in proposing tax reform, what criteria has Mr. Reagan chosen to structure a new tax system? He has given three: the plan must be simple; it must be fair; and it must be revenue neutral. Will the president's plan as now stated do the job? Let's take a look.

● *Fairness*. While the president's program would compress the number of tax brackets from fourteen to three, generally lowering the personal rate for most Americans, under scrutiny it has become clear the plan favors two groups: the poor (who without question need it) and the rich (who arguably do not). It is the middle class which already pays the bulk of the tax burden. Under the Reagan plan it will pay an *increased* share. Senator Packwood has brought this to the administration's attention, and with some sense of shock they seem to be listening.

The plan as stated gives most favored status to the wealthy. Despite a great deal of talk, it closes too few of the loopholes the president inveighs against. To make the plan politically palatable, the treatment of tax shelters has been eased, oil producers have won sizable exclusions, and by excepting 50 percent instead of 40 percent for capital gains, the capital gains tax has been cut effectively from 20 percent to 17.5 percent. (The original Treasury plan proposed taxing capital gains at the *same* rate as those imposed on wages and salaries, which would have merited the adjective revolutionary. But the president reneged.) Shareholders may now be able to reap 30 percent more after-tax income on dividends than under the present system, and stocks have reacted positively. When self interest talks, Wall Street listens.

The plan as now envisioned will substantially penalize property owners; encourage investors to shift from basic manufacturing industries to the president's favored high-tech companies; and cripple "high-tax" states which traditionally bear a greater burden in caring for the needs of citizens drawn to them precisely because of a proven ability to respond to those people's pressing needs. Furthermore, the president does not oblige defense contractors to eliminate the "completed-contract" accounting method, a practice even Defense Secretary Weinberger has asked to be revoked, a method which has allowed five of the nation's largest defense contractors

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to escape all federal income taxes from 1981-83.

● *Simplicity*. If fairness does not seem too deeply rooted in the president's plan, what of simplicity? Thomas M. Block, president of H&R Block, told *Business Week* that "the president opted a little more for fairness than for simplification." "Going from fourteen rates to three only affects the tax tables," he said. "It doesn't make the preparation process any simpler." According to the accounting firm of Touche Ross, a "staggering complexity has been included in the proposals." In such complexities, loopholes thrive. By allowing depreciation to be indexed to inflation, the plan makes another major retreat from simplicity, creating greater accounting costs — which will then be written off.

● *Revenue neutrality*. With a record deficit fast becoming a fiscal Grand Canyon, the Reagan plan cannot afford to be interpreted as another tax cut or as adding to the deficit. Constrained on the opposite side by supply-side ideology, it does not wish to be perceived as raising taxes. The difficulty is it may do both. Because numerous deductions may be replaced as of January 1986 while the new tax rates themselves would not go into effect until July, many taxpayers who have been led to expect a decrease would actually end up with an increase in 1986. According th Chase Econometrics, the plan would cause a 1 percent drop in growth next year, which would add to the shortfall in general federal revenues. Finally, the *Wall Street Journal* reports, for the 1991-95 period the president's plan would generate an average of $25 billion *less* in revenue each year than would the existing tax system.

It would appear that if the Reagan plan has not struck out by its own criteria, it has come sufficiently close to merit substantial revision. Still, the most crucial point has not been addressed: While tax reform is clearly needed, the real problem remains the economy itself and the catastrophic, glacial national deficits.

The economy has not sunk into the recession some analysts were predicting, but by all accounts it has cooled. Industrial production fell in both April and May. At the same time, our trade imbalance was the second largest in U.S. history. A group of six former Secretaries of the Treasury has called this unrestrained trade imbalance a hemorrhage in our trade sector. The month of May was also the largest single-month deficit in U.S. history. The federal deficit has nearly doubled in the last five (read Reagan) years, and will rise by a full third again by the end of his term in 1988. The dollar is massively overvalued because of the debt, a debt we are able to bear only because it is underwritten by foreign investment. Because of the strong dollar, commodity prices are at a two-year low. This year will be harder on farmers than last. Finally, savings and loan associations remain on shaky ground. Personal savings have fallen to their lowest share of disposable income in forty years, a boomerang effect not anticipated by Mr. Reagan's 1981 tax cut. Our fifteen largest banks, with assets of $852 billion in 1984, reported contingent liabilities at the same time of over $929 billion. These are major areas of concern.

It is time for Congress and the president to act. Not on tax reform, but on the deficit. The energy the president displays in his various campaigns should be marshaled toward a genuine bipartisan crusade against the debt. That sounds familiar, but this time it must not be sidetracked. Both the House and the Senate will finally have to get serious: the House on Social Security outlays — a freeze seems called for, at least in the absence of a fairer proposal to tax Social Security in higher income brackets — and stringent paring of all but means-tested programs to protect the poor; the Senate will have to opt for a freeze on defense spending as the House has already done. Still, as David Stockman told members of the New York Stock Exchange last month, "it is obvious enough that to close this [annual] $200 billion budget gap, we must massively cut spending or raise taxes by large, unprecedented magnitudes — or, by the lights of some, enact a sweeping mixture of both." We are afraid it is only the stiff medicine of the latter that will eventually save the ground on which to finally undertake wise, temperate, and always needed tax reform.

Child abuse

FAILING TO RESPOND

AGENCIES ARE CAUGHT SHORT

THE MEDIA have finally discovered child abuse, and particularly the sexual abuse of children. Sometimes it has seemed almost impossible to pick up a newspaper or turn on the evening news without hearing yet another horrifying account of crimes against children.

So it is not surprising that federal and state legislators should have taken up the issue, and drafted proposed legislation to deal with various aspects of the problem. This year, sixty bills dealing with child abuse were introduced into the Maine State Legislature; in California there were over one hundred such bills. They took up such matters as whether child abuse victims could give their testimony on videotape (and so be spared a court appearance), whether day care center employees should be finger-printed, and the length of prison terms for child molesters.

But all of the attention focused on the problem has had another result as well. Families where children are being abused are urged to seek help, and growing numbers do. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean they'll get help.

Initial reports of abuse or neglect are usually made to public child protection agencies which investigate reports of abuse and neglect, and refer the families to both public and private family service agencies. Many now have more reports of abuse than they can handle, and so they struggle to "manage" the backlog of abuse reports. Some no longer investigate if the complaint involves a child over twelve, others no longer investigate when the problem is "only" neglect, and some investigate only if it seems very serious.

(Continued on page 390)

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THE ETHICS OF TERROR

THE TRAP OF TOUGHING IT OUT

BEFORE THEY were hijacked, none of us knew who the passengers and crew of TWA Flight 847 were. Now they have identities. We have seen pilot John Testrake land and take off with a gun pointed at his head and have understood why he is so admired by friends and family. We are aware of the heart condition of Jimmy Dell Palmer and the fact that Simon Grossmayer has only one lung. We know the shock of the hijacking was too much for flight engineer Benjamin Zimmermann's eighty-eight-year-old father, who died twenty-four hours after his son's ordeal began. There is, to be sure, something vulgar in this minute attention from the media. We have seen the TV cameras exploit private grief to get a good story, and at the Beirut airport we watched reporters crowd around the hostages as if the latter were the stars of a rock concert.

Yet for all their lapses in taste, the media did succeed in giving us a picture of these latest terrorist victims. They became individuals, not abstractions, for us. We were given glimpses of the world through their eyes. Who could fail to imagine the mixed feelings that Benjamin Zimmermann would experience on returning home? We watched the grief of the family of Robert Dean Stethem, the young sailor slain by the hijackers, and we realized the rest of the hostage families had to be wondering if their loved ones might also be killed on a whim. We still wonder if the passengers and crew of Flight 847 will ever again feel at home in this world.

Now, however, the crucial question has become how in the long term we will respond as a nation to these events. The president made clear the context in which he thinks we should put TWA Flight 847 and the other terrorist acts that followed it. Such acts, the president declared, are the work of "uncivilized barbarians," attacks by those without real power or principles against those with power and principles. He has hinted at revenge, insisting that "terrorists and those who support them must and will be held to account." From those who did not have the responsibility of getting back the hostages, the calls for toughing it out were even louder and especially critical of television coverage of Flight 847. Television "focuses almost obsessively on what is at hand," the *New Republic* complained in a recent editorial. "It is inevitable that once one's gaze is fixed on the identifiable individuals who are suffering, the pressure to settle, at any cost, grows."

Such calls for toughness and such hints at post-release retaliation are understandable, and if they do not give pause to fanatics willing to die in order to pull off a skyjacking, they at least promise to make other terrorists think twice. Yet if all we do following this latest hostage crisis is come up with better ways to hang tough, we will once again have passed up a chance to look closely at our own involvement in the terrorism that haunts us.

By any criteria, our tourists, the hostages on TWA Flight 847, were innocents caught up in political events. But if terrorism includes all warfare that purposely victimizes innocent men and women to achieve its ends, then it is not at all clear that as a nation we are innocents. We do not have to pose this question in the abstract. We have only to ask ourselves about the political-military role we have played in recent years in the Mideast and Central America. Did we ever attempt to curb Savak, the Shah of Iran's murderous secret police, whom we helped supply and train? Before Flight 847 did we put any serious pressure on Israel to release the more than 760 mainly Shiite Lebanese held without formal charges in Atlit prison? Is it significant that we refer to these men, held by a close ally, as detainees rather than hostages? How deeply has our government ever concerned itself with the victims, save when they were American nuns, of the Salvadoran death squads and government troops? These are ethical and religious questions, matters of commission and omission, that as a nation we should have looked into a long time ago. Now they are questions that terrorists at the point of a gun insist we ask, and naturally, our response is one of outrage.

The difficulty of pursuing such questions while under attack is that any change in our thinking, any admission of culpability, borders on legitimizing terrorists' demands. It is irony of the worst sort. Our most thoughtful response to the terrorism we have been victimized by promises to make us appear weak in our own as well as terrorists' eyes. Worse still, we cannot own up to any second thoughts we might have without owning up to our use of double standards, without admitting that often we have been "good Germans" and looked the other way if the terrorism going on around us appeared to work in our favor.

Yet never has it been more important that as a nation we rethink our attitude toward terrorism, acknowledge that we cannot be a party to the sophisticated terrorism of secret police or tolerate mass imprisonments by an ally we arm and finance, then claim innocence when our citizens are the victims of the crude terrorism of a plane hijacking. Toughing it out will not get us past such contradictions any more than will attacking network television for its coverage of our hostages in captivity. Indeed, if anything epitomizes the trap toughing it out promises, it is this desire to keep us from seeing our hostages as individuals with families and loved ones. What it says is that for the future it will not be enough for us to deny the humanness of the other side's terrorist victims. To tough it out, we will have to go further; we will have to complete the circle by turning our own into nonpersons as well.

NICOLAUS MILLS

(Nicolaus Mills, a past contributor to Commonweal, *teaches at Sarah Lawrence College.)*

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Beyond the stage of investigation, there are even fewer places to refer troubled families. One family service agency in Maine has a waiting list of about 350 families — 120 of which need help with "intra-familial sexual abuse." Without more staff, it will take at least six months to get to all those families, and money for more staff is one thing they (and their funding sources) don't have. A similar account comes from a family service agency in Oklahoma, where the long-term effects of economic recession are taking their toll.

It is chilling to think that families who get up the strength to come to a social agency and report that their children are being sexually abused, may be served . . . by being put on a list. Those child-protection workers and family therapists aren't irresponsible or heartless. Like their colleagues throughout the system, they have too few staff for too many families.

As one Florida social worker explained, most of the proposed laws deal with criminals and day care centers, but 97 percent of the problem occurs within families. And whether the adults involved are part of the family or not, the children need help, the families need help. And "help" in this case means trained staff, which in turn means the one thing the politicians don't want to talk about: money.

NANCY AMIDEI

(Nancy Amidei writes regularly for Commonweal.)

The disabled in the USSR

WAITING FOR MIKHAIL

OLD NEGLECT, NEW REPRISALS

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, the new Soviet leader, faces an important problem which is not likely to appear on his Politburo's agenda, at least until the Soviet Union's international prestige has been damaged. The problem, put simply, is Soviet observance of the United Nations' Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992), and its treatment of disabled rights activists.

Several years ago the United Nations' General Assembly adopted resolutions making 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP), and 1983-1992 the Decade of Disabled Persons. In these declarations, the Soviet Union and many other countries promised to seek "full participation and equality" for *all* disabled citizens. It was agreed that governments should take a leading role in these efforts, that non-governmental organizations should assist governments, and that the progress of all countries toward "full participation and equality" should be monitored and assessed periodically at the international, regional, and national levels.

That was the promise given the United Nations. What is the reality for millions of disabled persons in the USSR today? How have Soviet authorities observed IYDP and the Decade of Disabled Persons?

In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual summer schedule, only one issue will be published each month during June, July, and August. The next issue will be dated August 9.

The subject must be viewed in the light of Soviet history and the social and economic situation facing the population as a whole. What emerges is a complex and, indeed, contradictory picture of Soviet reality. On the one hand, the Communist Party has a sustained commitment to improving the living standards of the Soviet people, evidenced by important achievements in the development of public health care and social security. On the other hand, there remain enormous flaws in the social welfare system (incredible inefficiency, indifference, and corruption), the result of the Soviet economy's inability to provide the general population, and disabled persons in particular, with conveniences and benefits available in the West. There exists as well a curious separation between the relatively privileged status of blind and deaf persons disabled in World War II, and the deplorable conditions of the remainder of the Soviet Union's physically disabled population. These conclusions emerged from a scholarly conference on the topic held earlier this year at Michigan State University.

The conference's findings also disclosed dramatic abuses in Soviet treatment of disabled rights activists, abuses which suggest the Soviet Union has seriously violated the spirit of IYDP and the Decade of Disabled Persons.

The Action Group to Defend the Rights of the Disabled in the USSR was formed in 1978 by three paraplegics frustrated by official indifference to their many appeals for equal rights since 1956. They decided to form a national organization on disability, a non-government association modeled closely after the already existing All-Union Societies of the Blind and of the Deaf. The general purpose of the Action Group was strikingly similar to that of these *lawful* associations: to provide members with educational programs, technical training, and a network of special industrial enterprises which would give disabled persons an income and self-respect, thus permitting them to lead independent, active, and normal lives. Through such efforts the Action Group hoped, over time, to undermine the widespread image of disabled persons as helpless, hopeless, nonfunctioning, and noncontributing members of Soviet society.

From the outset, however, the Soviet authorities reacted negatively. They categorically refused to accept the need for an independent national association, maintaining that the Ministry for Social Services adequately fulfilled all the needs of the disabled. Furthermore, according to the U.S. Congressional Helsinki Commission, since the Action Group's formation in 1978, its members and supporters have become the target of increasing repression which has included violent house searches, seizures of books and letters, the threatened removal of parental rights, brutal beatings, death threats, deportation, and psychiatric repression.

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Nor has this official campaign abated since the Soviet Union endorsed IYDP. In February 1981, for example, the authorities sentenced Yury Valov, author of the *samizdat* essay "Word of an Invalid," to an indefinate term of confinement in a psychiatric hospital. More recently, according to the Helsinki Commission, in June 1983 Vasily Pervushin was arrested for his outspoken defense of the Action Group. A disabled and decorated veteran of World War II, he was forcibly taken to a special psychiatric hospital near Alma-Ata, where Pervushin remains to this day.

Despite these reprisals and the deportation of two of the Group's leading members to West Germany in late 1982, the tiny Action Group somehow continues to function. In recent years, the Group has focused on the state's pursuit of a policy designed to disable healthy political prisoners and to erode further the health of already disabled political prisoners. Abundant evidence to corroborate this assertion has been painstakingly gathered by Amnesty International. According to its report, Soviet authorities promote the slow tortured death of uncompromising political prisoners through a calculated application of harsh labor conditions. The authoritative *List of Political Prisoners in the USSR*, compiled by Cronid Lubarsky in Munich, reports that no fewer than 63 of the 903 known Soviet political prisoners confined during 1983 were disabled or seriously ill.

What can Mr. Gorbachev do to bring the Soviet Union somewhat in accord with the spirit of the Decade of Disabled Persons and safeguard his country's international prestige?

In the year remaining before the United Nations' crucial *first* review of its members' observance of the Decade, Mr. Gorbachev should do three things. He should personally examine the cases of Vasily Pervushin, Yury Valov, and others confined to psychiatric hospitals for their disabled rights activism and end once and for all this grave affront to the dignity of the disabled; similarly he should examine the debilitating conditions of political confinement in the USSR, bringing them in line with the relevant and humane provisions of the Soviet Corrective Labor and Criminal Codes. Secondly, he and his colleagues should carefully study the Action Group's basic request for the formation of an All-Union Society of Physically Disabled Persons modeled closely after the already existing and lawful All-Union Societies of the Deaf and the Blind. (A successful prototype, the Invalids Federation, existed in the USSR from 1925 until 1956.) Lastly, Mr. Gorbachev should see Soviet disabled rights activists for what they truly are: not "criminals" and "anti-Soviets" seeking to embarrass the regime, but loyal citizens committed to helping the disabled to become independent, contributing members of Soviet society.

WALTER PARCHOMENKO

(Walter Parchomenko is a Visiting Scholar at the Harriman Institute for Advanced Study of the Soviet Union at Columbia University. His articles on Soviet and East European affairs have appeared in the New York Times, *the* Christian Science Monitor, *the* Wall Street Journal, *and numerous other publications.)*

Report from Collegeville

LENNY BRUCE PRINCIPLE

CHANGE IN THE CHURCH(ES)

YOU PROBABLY don't know what the Lenny Bruce principle is in interreligious dialogue. It is something I discovered in the year I have just spent as a Fellow at the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research in Collegeville, Minnesota, located on the campus of St. John's Benedictine University.

Each Fellow comes here with a formal project that has been staked out and approved in advance. As our work progressed, we consulted each other on a regular basis. I learned far more, for instance, about St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans than I ever knew before, thanks to a Presbyterian scripture scholar. I learned much about the concept of need in Thomas Aquinas, thanks to a Roman Catholic Sister who was a Fellow; and taken against the background of starvation in Africa, her development of the duty of people and nations with superfluous wealth was anything but abstract and medieval. Another Sister here turned out to be a friend from the days of Chicago Inter-Student Catholic Action years ago, a person totally committed to nonviolence and working on a peace Christology. I did not end up changing my mind on the basic issue of pacifism, but must admit that my dear B.V.M. friend had me backed into a corner too often for comfort. Other projects, including my own study of the development of Catholic social thought and its ecumenical dimensions, covered a wide range, from a reexamination of Darwin to an investigation of the religious conscience and the Holocaust.

When the Fellows were not discussing their projects, they talked about everything from the policies of the Reagan administration (highly critical) to those of Pope John Paul (dubious to negative). By far the biggest part of our time was spent on religious subjects. Which is where the Lenny Bruce principle comes in.

Comedian Lenny Bruce used to talk about the Roman Catholic church as being the only *the* church. Since Vatican II that Catholic claim has been placed pretty much in the discard file, but the old image showed up in our religious conversations.

In these discussions it became quite clear that if we are ever to have a unified church of Christ, we need to make structural changes in the churches, changes which would preserve essentials while removing unnecessary sources of friction and division. Thus the Roman Catholic church needs greater constitutional protection against the arbitrary abuse of power on every level, from the pope and Cardinal Ratzinger on down. (Pope John Paul is obviously an expert on Catholic social thought, but I wish he would give as much attention to the principle of subsidiarity within the church as he does in society at large.)

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On the other hand, churches which lack anything like the teaching office of bishop might need to rethink their authority structure. Churches which rely almost entirely on preaching might want to take a look at their sacramental system.

So I don't think there was any formal disagreement among us on the need for change inside *each* Christian church. However, I discovered that everybody is curious about what Bruce called the *the* church and that people love nothing better than to discuss its foibles and peculiarities, once they learn they can do so without giving offense. In discussions we usually ended up doing exactly that.

I realized in a way I never had before how incidents like the crusade against liberation theology or the silencing of Franciscan Leonardo Boff look to other Christians — or just how many such affairs we Catholics manage to produce in a year to be dissected and deplored. As a consequence, we Fellows did not have as many sessions on changes that might be necessary in Protestant churches, and I was sorry about that.

Worship, of course, was a positive element. One Episcopal Fellow put us Roman Catholics to shame; I don't think he missed one morning, noon, or evening prayer or the Eucharist the whole time he was here. All were struck with the beauty of the liturgy as carried out by the Benedictines at St. John's. Nevertheless, for every Fellow who thought Protestants could learn from Roman Catholic worship practices, there were others who much preferred Protestant ways. Quite obviously, in a unified Christianity some diversity in worship will have to be the rule.

As this year of intellectual exchange and common prayer drew to a close and I reflected on it, I could not get much beyond these two apparently contradictory facts: how very many historical, cultural, and theological differences there are between us Christians, and at the same time, very strikingly, how much we hold in common. Perhaps not much of a conclusion to come to after a year of ecumenical discussion, but it does seem to me no small thing to be able to proclaim together that Christ is Lord.

JAMES O'GARA

(James O'Gara, former Editor of Commonweal, *will serve as Visiting W. Harold and Martha Welch Professor in American Studies at the Univeristy of Notre Dame for 1985-86.)*

ON MAY 26, St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, awarded an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters to James O'Gara. The following is excerpted from the citation:

"To be in any position for thirty-two years is an accomplishment. . . . As managing editor and then editor . . . Jim O'Gara . . . directed the *Commonweal* through the tumultuous times of pre-conciliar, conciliar, and post-Vatican Council II discourse. . . . Political, cultural, social, and religious questions were a weekly concern that he surveyed with dignity and grace. . . . James O'Gara steadily sought out and stressed the Catholic tradition of social thought. He kept the faith, finished the course and now runs the race anew as a scholar-philosopher with equal vigor and clarity of thought and expression. . . ."

Of several minds: *David R. Carlin, Jr.*

MARIO SLIPS THROUGH

THE DEMOCRATS & THE ABORTION DILEMMA

IN VIEW OF Geraldine Ferraro's unpleasant experience in the 1984 election, what is a Catholic Democrat who aspires to high office — especially the highest office of all — to do about the abortion issue? This is of course not a purely hypothetical question. It is a practical question confronting at least two prominent Americans: Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Governor Mario Cuomo of New York.

They face a dilemma. On the one hand it is nearly impossible to win the Democratic nomination for president without significant backing from liberals in the party and the press. Yet liberal support won't be forthcoming for any candidate unacceptable to feminists, since feminism is an essential ingredient of contemporary liberalism. But to win feminist support one has to be pro-choice on abortion, this being the feminist acid test. In short, to get the Democratic nomination for president one has to be pro-choice.

On the other hand, any Catholic candidate for president who is pro-choice is likely to be verbally beaten up by Cardinal O'Connor and other members of the Catholic hierarchy. This may not always have been the case, but the Ferraro candidacy in 1984 appears to have been a watershed; so it will be the case from now on. The candidate will also be the target of endless pro-life picketing and frequent Sunday sermons. Worst of all, the whole controversy will be the subject of enormous press attention, diverting voters from the non-abortion portions of the candidate's platform, and creating the impression of a candidate under siege by the very people who in some sense are his or her natural constituency — a man or woman who would like to lead the nation yet cannot even command the respect of his or her own religious communion.

Hence the dilemma: if Cuomo and Kennedy remain pro-choice, their fellow Catholics will embarrass the daylights out of them; but if they renege on their pro-choice stance, their liberal supporters will ditch them. Either way their gooses will be cooked.

One way out of a dilemma is to pass through its horns, and this is what Mario Cuomo appears to be attempting in his recent *Commonweal* interview [May 31]. In his celebrated Notre Dame ad-

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dress of last fall, Cuomo opposed legislating against abortion on two grounds. First, to do so would be contrary to the principle of religious tolerance which is required in our religiously pluralistic society. Second, even if a legal ban against abortion could be enacted, that ban, like the nation's earlier noble experiment in banning alcohol, would be unworkable; and as in the case of Prohibition, widespread contempt for the particular law would generate a creeping disrespect for law in general; and thus our final condition — abortion plus lawlessness — would be worse than our original state of abortion within the law.

The first of these two arguments is weak, since it assumes that belief in the immorality of abortion is an act of religious faith, not a moral insight arrived at pretty much the same way we arrive at other moral insights. The anti-abortion party, however, or at least the more polished among them, contend it is the latter, i.e., an act of reason, not an act of faith.

But the second of Cuomo's arguments, the one that says a legal ban on abortion is impractical, has considerably more merit. Personally, I happen not to agree with it. (Neither, I take it, do the Catholic bishops.) It seems to me that an approach along the lines of the proposed Hatch Amendment, which would give the states the power to legislate regarding abortion, might well be workable, in the sense that it could significantly reduce the number of abortions in the nation while not significantly eroding respect for law. But Cuomo's position is at least an arguable one; it is the sort of position a reasonable person of good will might take.

In the *Commonweal* interview Cuomo drops the first (that is, the weaker) of his Notre Dame arguments, while retaining and even elaborating on the second. He says in effect: Look, I agree with the bishops that abortion is morally wrong. I agree with them too when they say we can't just deplore abortion and then, Pilate-like, wash our hands of it; we're obliged to work to reduce the frequency of abortion in America. But I disagree when they say, speaking at the level of political prudence, that the best way to do this is the negative way of passing anti-abortion legislation. As I read the nation's political and social scene, the negative route will prove counterproductive. A better anti-abortion strategy is the positive approach. Instead of passing prohibitory laws which won't work anyway, create programs to make it easier for pregnant girls and women to have babies and then either keep the newborns or put them up for adoption. So you see, the bishops and I are in accord about the end, about the fundamental principle at stake. Our disagreement has to do solely with means to that end.

Governor Cuomo is nothing if not intelligent. Though feminists and liberals won't be perfectly happy with his position, since he eschews all talk about a woman's sacred right to abortion, his bottom line is nonetheless the same as theirs: No anti-abortion legislation, no repeal of *Roe v. Wade*. How can they be unhappy about that? As for the bishops, how loudly can they censure him, since their disagreement with him has to do not with a moral principle but with practical political strategies intended to translate that principle into practice? They can say of course that they disagree with his strategy; they can argue that he misreads the political situation. But that's a limp condemnation, especially in view of the fact that the bishops profess to be authorities on moral principles, not political strategies, while acknowledging that authority on questions of political strategy normally ought to reside with intelligent and experienced laypersons, of whom Governor Cuomo is palpably the type. Whatever the theoretical merits of Cuomo's position, it is a brilliant political stroke. Appeasing the feminists and checkmating the bishops, Cuomo has slipped through the horns of the dilemma.

Are you listening, Teddy Kennedy? (And are you listening, Cardinal O'Connor?)

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

(David R. Carlin, Jr., is a senator and deputy majority leader in the Rhode Island state legislature; he has also taught sociology and written frequently for Commonweal *and other publications. He has recently begun writing a regular column in these pages.)*

Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

IS GOOD NEWS NEWS?

OR, CAN HOPE SURVIVE THE MEDIA?

DAN RATHER discussed it on CBS radio with U.S. Representative Dorman; John Chancellor spent a Saturday night hour mulling it over on NBC. The American Society of Newspaper Editors had conducted a survey. Local editors around the country followed up with the testing of regional opinion. *The St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch*, for one, not only sought the reactions of their regular subscribers; they went so far as to seek the ideas of the seventh and eighth graders at St. Mark's parochial school.

What is of such concern to these survey takers and commentators? That Americans seem to be losing faith in the media. They question the trustworthiness and credibility of the news gatherers. They feel exploited rather than safeguarded by the press. Moreover, the number of those who do not read newspapers or who have stopped watching network news is increasing. Why? And what to do?

The response of the newspeople is somewhat querulous. They rather like to think of themselves as the watchdogs of society. They are the great protectors of the public's right to know. Never have they had access to such technical resources; never have their stars had such celebrity status. But the era of media celebration and self-congratulation which began with the rise of the anchorman and culminated in the investigation

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of Watergate seems to be over. No longer is the attack coming only from the far right; it is coming from recently faithful readers and viewers.

There is, as always, a temptation to equate criticism with a call to censorship. Yet the critics are not disputing the constitutionally-based right of the press. They do not deny that a self-governing people must depend on the free dissemination of information. As John Chancellor rather reluctantly admitted, the perception that the press is untrustworthy must be taken seriously if that is the public's perception — and it certainly seems to be.

We are not necessarily rising to the defense of the overpaid anchor people or the dogmatic, all-knowing columnists if we view the matter as serious, too. Communication binds the members of a free society together. Common action is taken on the basis of shared information. Failed communication eats away at the sources of our commonality. It seems to me that the current troubles of the media rise — at least in part — from forgetting its obligation to create community.

Two of the complaints from those surveyed are reflections of this deeper underlying flow. People complain that the press is cynical, that it does not stress American values, that it does not give us any good news about ourselves. They complain, also, that the press invades privacy and treats its news sources with disrespect.

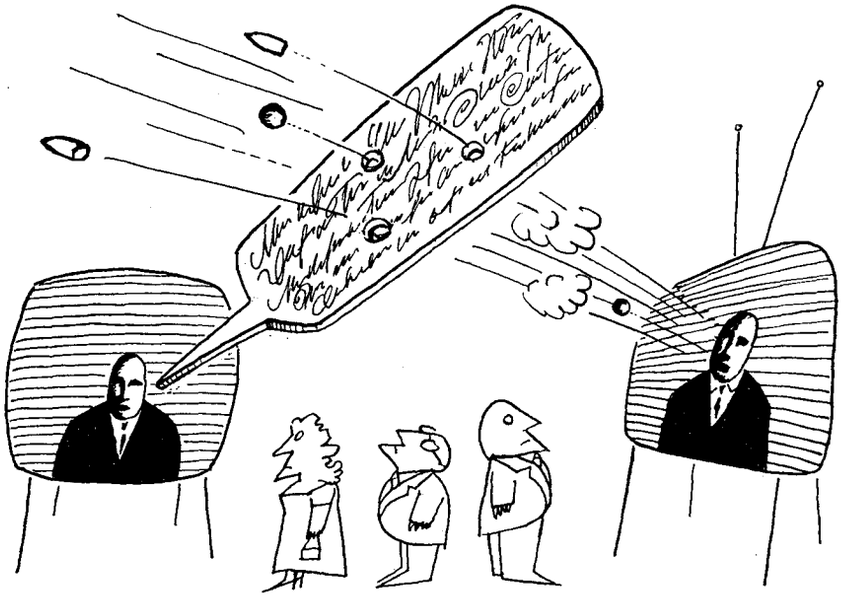
It is perfectly true that, as one of the editors of the *Atlanta Constitution* puts it, the big city press is more "urban" in attitude than most Americans — read "urban" here as more hardened to corruption. It is also true that it seems to have lost interest in telling us about those things which draw us together. Papers are full of self-help and fitness features, advice columns, and all-revealing articles about currently (and temporarily) famous individuals — but the news of people acting together — of clubs, associations; volunteer groups — is hard to find. The obituaries are still there, but accounts of weddings — really the heralding of new units of society and faith in the future — have disappeared from many metropolitan dailies.

The invasion of privacy is easy to document. As I write, the hijacking disaster in the Middle East is in its fourth day, and the newspapers and news shows have been full of the merciless quizzing — albeit in unctuously solicitous tones — of the released captives and of relatives and husbands and wives of those still held. How do you feel? What did you think? What do you think your husband/father/brother is feeling now? Do you worry that they might be killed? The disrespect for news sources is also apparent. Arrogant questioners assail the motives and judgment of government spokesmen, former high officials, and the ministers of foreign governments — all summoned before the news tribunal by the miracle of modern technology.

All this has affected our collective psyche. It has affected our ability to act and to hope. On a morning not too long ago the big urban dailies had the following chronicle of woe: The FBI was under investigation for, at best, failing to uncover the Mafia connections to a former cabinet member's business — at worst, covering it up; the SEC was investigating one of the country's best known investment companies for defrauding banks by kiting millions of dollars in checks; an ever-widening spy ring was being uncovered in the most trusted branches of the Navy; two of the best restaurants in the nation's capital were covers for cocaine dealers; scientists had concluded that the damage to the atmosphere — the so called "greenhouse effect" — was irreversible and would eventually lessen our food-growing capacity; and on and on. It was a heavy load to carry into the day. Disheartening. Sapping of energy. Destructive of hopes.

But that's the news, press people protest. What would you have us do? Caroline Mattingly, chairperson of Congressional Families for Drug-Free Youth, cites one small example of what might be done. At the time all this bad news was breaking, President Reagan was in Atlanta on his tax reform selling tour. He was covered by all the networks and the White House press corps. They reported — briefly — that he spoke, what he said, and where. But, although the students of Atlanta's Northside High School for the Performing Arts danced, sang, and acted their hearts out before the press and under the lights to demonstrate the achievement of a doughty principal, dedicated parents, and a cooperating student body in making one city high school drug-free; although the president chose to speak there to highlight that achievement, and although he hailed it, there was not a single mention of it in any news report. Mrs. Mattingly thinks a line on the evening news, a paragraph in a news service story about this successful ending to a long hard struggle with one of the country's worst problems would have been good news — and real news — to us all. I think she is right.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY



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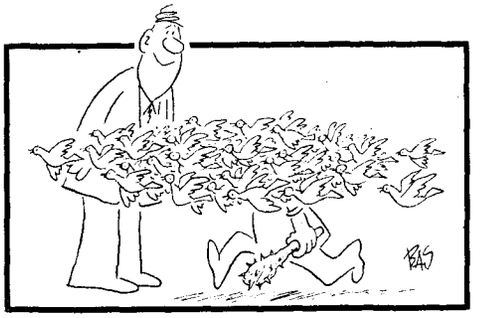

Appointment with Hitler

PETER STEINFELS

AMONG the several deplorable side effects of the Bitburg controversy was this: the question of the moral meaning of the war against Hitler's Germany was submerged in the question of the moral insensitivity of Mr. Reagan. We were all pressed to make a judgment about the president; we did not have to think through our judgments about the war. Particularly in religious journals, where questions about the morality of warfare are constantly being raised, an opportunity was lost.

But would the opportunity have been seized, even in the absence of the president's unfortunate performance? No one that I recall raised the question of the Second World War's morality at the time of the D-Day anniversary. Even more to the point, it seemed to me, was another anniversary. Two years ago students at Oxford passed a resolution effectively repudiating the notorious Oxford Union motion of fifty years previous. On February 9, 1933, ten days after Hitler came to power, the Oxford Union Society, a celebrated training ground for future national leaders, had voted, by just short of a two-to-one margin, that its members would "in no circumstances fight for its King and Country."

This fiftieth anniversary repudiation of the Oxford Union pledge was reported in a feature story on page one of the *New York Times*. It was given similar prominent attention in the *Washington Post*. It was noted, perhaps as a curiosity more than anything else, on the networks and elsewhere. Yet it stirred no serious discussion in religious circles.

At the time I found this silence disturbing, and I thought of it again in connection with the Bitburg events. The fact is that pacifism of the sort which would refuse to fight for King and Country, or for Constitution and Country, or for NATO and Country, has a very respectable place today in the churches, especially in the circles that are most visibly present in numerous struggles for social justice. Beyond a significant group of committed pacifists, there are also many Christian leaders who stop short of embracing pacifism not because they are compelled by an alternative moral position but only as a concession to personal unreadiness or pastoral practicality.

This was brought home to me at the November 1982 meeting at which the Catholic bishops discussed the second draft of the pastoral letter on nuclear arms. A number of bishops told me about the profound evolution that had taken place in their attitudes on war and peace. One explained that he would not "go so far" as Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle in opposing the nuclear deterrent or even conventional arms, nor would he quite reject all national defense by military means in principle. But his reasons were revealing: "The people aren't ready for that. . . . You can't get too far in front of them. . . . I don't think I have the courage to stand out that way." When I asked if he thought the use of military force was *ever* justified, he would not go beyond saying, "War never solves any problems."

It is perfectly true that war never solves *all* problems, even though people in wartime are apt to think it will. I would also agree that war always plants the germs of *new* problems of future violence, which sooner or later will spring up to be confronted. Every day, in Latin America, in the Middle East, in Asia, we are paying the long-term costs of past wars. But it was at least part of the meaning of our presidentially botched V-E Day memorial that war solves *some* problems.

TO BE SPECIFIC: Hitler and his accomplices did not complete the Holocaust. They did not establish uncontested reign over the Eurasian continent, from Siberia to the British Isles. They did not kill or enslave, as they had planned, sufficient numbers of Poles to secure *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe. They did not inherit British and French colonies. They did not develop nuclear weapons and intercontinental missiles.

There are those who would argue that these consequences were outweighed by the European war's vast loss of life and, more importantly, by its *taking* of life; by its dragooning and numbing of consciences; by its undoubted atrocities, including deliberate terror bombing of civilian centers like Dresden; and by its ambiguous outcome in Soviet expansion, Cold War, and potential nuclear globicide. But I wonder if my bishop friend

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actually made that argument. Or was he simply silent? Did he reflect on his previous conclusion?

If he did not, I can easily imagine some reasons why. At least among American Catholics, pacifists have had to struggle to get any kind of hearing whatsoever about the morality of warfare; no one else has been so persistent, or effective, in doing so. Non-pacifists who nonetheless had serious moral misgivings about particular aspects of American foreign policy or about our nuclear arsenal could not help but appreciate the pacifist effort. Why dwell on differences when so much common ground remains untilled?

Today pacifism has won a new legitimacy in the American Catholic church, a legitimacy recognized in perhaps the most important American episcopal document of recent decades. With that legitimacy, it seems to me, comes a responsibility, including a responsibility to address certain obvious, although not at all simple, questions about a central event in our history. Would it have been truer to the Gospel for this nation to have refused engagement in World War II? Were the pacifists, here and in Europe, who opposed rearmament in the 1930s best fulfilling Christ's call to be peacemakers?

These are questions which unfortunately have sometimes been asked in a polemical manner, as debaters' devices, and as though the validity of pacifism turned utterly on some yes-or-no reply. I do not mention them in that spirit. Nor do I propose even to begin answering them. They are, however, basic questions that can no more be ignored than Mr. Reagan could ignore the reality of concentration camps and still claim any voice in the moral debates of twentieth-century humankind.

IN NOTING the lack of pacifist reaction to the fiftieth anniversary of the Oxford Union resolution, I should have granted an exception. It is an exception, however, that only bolsters my concern. One pacifist who discussed the Oxford Union episode was the *Washington Post* columnist Colman McCarthy. McCarthy believed that, although pacifists "now see many of their positions shared by mainline Catholic and Protestant groups," the Oxford Union news stories had treated pacifism unfairly. Pacifism, he insisted, should not be equated with appeasement; it is another and, in his view, more effective form of seeking justice and resolving disputes by means of moral force, reason, non-cooperation, and organized mass resistance. But even this larger view of pacifism, McCarthy wrote, "inevitably meets the so-called 'real-world' question of Hitler and the Jews."

Not even my great respect for Colman McCarthy could keep me from blinking at that "so-called." Today I wonder what we would say if Mr. Reagan had used it rather than his own inept constructions. Was McCarthy suggesting that Hitler's campaign to wipe out the Jews did not occur in the real world? Presumably not. Probably he only wanted to suggest what I have already admitted, that questions like this can be advanced simply as a rhetorical gambit to shatter idealistic pacifism on the hard rocks of the "real world." Still, despite this unsettling hint that "the so-called 'real-world' question of Hitler and the Jews" may not be serious because not all its askers are serious, McCarthy does take it seriously enough to venture a reply. He does so by quoting Dwight Macdonald. In an essay on pacifism, Macdonald had pointed out that though the Jews were not pacifists, they had ended up practicing non-resistance in any case:

> Pacifists are often asked: What would you have advised the Jews of Europe to have done after Hitler had conquered the continent — to submit peacefully to the Nazis and go along quietly to the gas chambers? The odd thing about this question is that those who ask it have forgotten that this is pretty much what most of the Jews of Europe did in reality, not because they were pacifists, for they weren't, but because they, like most people today, had become accustomed to obeying the authority of the state: that is, essentially, because they recognized the authority of force.

There are several things wrong with this reply. The recognition by non-resisting Jews of "the authority of force" was in fact quite different from the habitual deference to the state practiced by the rest of us. The Jews suffered no uncertainty about the illegitimacy of Nazi authority. If they bowed to it, that was because it was the authority of the gun — direct, deadly, and overwhelming. More to the point, Macdonald was dealing with the question posed "after Hitler had conquered the continent" and the question posed to the Jews under Hitler's sway. The question pacifists must pose (and not leave to some debater) is whether Hitler should have been prevented from conquering the continent in the first place. Or, as actually happened, should he have been prevented from conquering the rest of the continent and from retaining what had been conquered?

Colman McCarthy thought that pacifism is not understood because its practitioners are not in the history books, and, quoting the Vatican to the effect that spending on armaments kills the poor, he concluded: "No such legacy of death is on the conscience of pacifists." I wonder how rigorously he has looked at the grounds for that statement.

I WAS CERTAINLY not raised to be a pacifist; in my younger years, I am sure my parents believed it would be more than sufficient if I simply turned out a law-abiding citizen. Nonetheless, the post-Vatican II idea that pacifism was "a valid option" was already taken for granted in a home that received the *Catholic Worker* every month and followed the debates about nuclear weapons in *Commonweal*. Thanks to such subversive influences, by high school I was writing term papers on the immorality of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, not the prevailing view in a Midwest Catholic high school in the fifties. By college I had arrived at a rough version of the bishops' current ambivalent judgment on our nuclear deterrent. At the same time this concern with the morality of modern warfare tied into a growing awareness of the churches' terrible failure to oppose the tide of totalitarianism in the 1920s and '30s. Gordon Zahn was on the faculty of Loyola University in Chicago, where I was a student; during my junior year, he published *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars* on the

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support the German church lent to Nazi aggression.

Ironically, it may have been the work of Zahn — a scholar and pacifist I have always admired, and whose concern for individual moral responsibility in regard to war I share — that set me in a direction away from his own convictions. Absorption in the moral problems of totalitarianism had already introduced me to Christians whose opposition to Nazism finally convinced them to accept forms of armed resistance — people like Emmanuel Mounier in France and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Germany. Zahn had studied the way moral principles were applied, or not applied, by those called upon to support Hitler's wars. What about those on the other side of Germany's borders? What about English and French citizens who were sensitive to the moral problems of warfare — and yet observed Hitler rearm and Nazi power go from victory to victory, in the Rhineland, in Spain, in Austria, in Czechoslovakia?

Eventually I spent a year in various Paris libraries, reading through volumes of magazines and the minutes of meetings from the 1930s, following the foreign-policy debates not of Christians but of adherents to another "faith," that of the French left. What I learned about pacifism in those circumstances was not especially edifying. Out of a moral repulsion against war, men of high intelligence made excuses for Nazism, portrayed Hitler as a peace-loving veteran who had known the horrors of war firsthand, and relentlessly denounced any display of French firmness in the face of German demands. These men, too, insisted that pacifism did not mean acquiescing in tyranny. They, too, wrote of organized nonviolent resistance. But when the moment of truth arrived, that resistance did not materialize. What materialized instead was the sorry spectacle of a few of those pacifist intellectuals setting up as embittered Nazi propagandists in occupied France, attacking the Allies and the Free French, and spinning fantasies of a peaceful United States of Europe established under Hitlerian auspices. (This historical experience is one of the reasons why some left-of-center French Catholics took a rather wary view of the U.S. bishops' nuclear pastoral, especially since the letter was sometimes misrepresented in the media as "pacifist.")

Obviously, that is not the whole story of pacifism. But it is part of the story, part that should not be ignored. The chronicle

that includes Franz Jaegerstaetter and the miracle of a conscience holding true in the face of every kind of abandonment, that includes Pastor Trocmé and the village which he organized to rescue Jewish children from a merciless state, should also include those examples of the will to peace deteriorated into massive self-deception. Whether one thinks of the few truly squalid cases of collaboration with Nazism or of the many run-of-the-mill examples of self-righteousness or wishful thinking, the history of pacifism, at least in the 1930s, is nowhere near as uncomplicated as Colman McCarthy imagines.

I was not only reading the arguments of pacifists that year in Paris. I was also reading those of some other French left-wing intellectuals and political activists. They, too, had been in strong opposition to much of France's foreign policy. They, too, had deplored armaments. They, too, desperately wanted to avoid war. But reticently and painfully they concluded that keeping the peace demanded arming and taking the risk of confronting Hitler. Eventually they decided that there were values even more precious than keeping the peace. Among them was the far from perfect French freedom that stood in the way of Nazi outrages, against human dignity. Not all the judgments of this group, any more than the pacifists', were accurate or wise. But by and large I found that their vision — roughly speaking, a secular counterpart to just-war theory — was politically more acute and morally more sustaining.

This little bit of history hardly disposes of all the claims of pacifism or the moral objections to war. It does not tell us what to think about the *contras* or Star Wars or Mr. Reagan's vision of East-West conflict. It should not tempt us into facile analogies. In fact, one of the lessons of the 1930s, too readily forgotten, is the danger of historical analogies. Heed the lesson of Munich, is a formula repeated at the outbreak of any international crisis; yet when we return to the debates at the time of Munich, we find both statesmen and pacifists in thrall to the notion of heeding the lesson of August 1914 and determined to do anything to prevent a local crisis from erupting into general war.

It is not true, moreover, that the policy of appeasement was the work of pacifists or more generally of the left. Belatedly perhaps but definitely, most of the left in France and England supported military resistance to Hitler and his allies. The pacifist minority was not in power. Appeasement was the work of respectable citizens who were more afraid of Communism than fascism, of confused politicians, and even of generals averse to taking risks. Pacifism may have contributed to the public climate in which appeasement in Europe and isolationism in America flourished, but it is hard to separate the impact of moral appeals from the probably larger role of plain cynicism and national selfishness.

Still, it is troubling to recognize that pacifists would have done out of altruism and principle what others actually did out of self-interest and short-sightedness. Pacifists endorsed, encouraged, passionately urged policies that, as near as we can tell with our limited human powers, helped bring on the world war.

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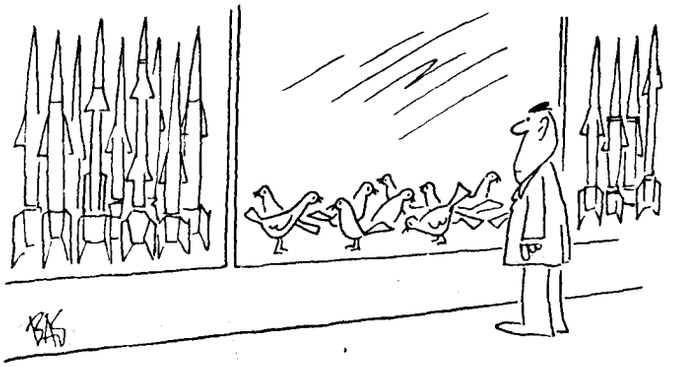
DOES THAT REALLY have anything to do with us? After all, between the 1930s and our day we have crossed a historic divide. Hasn't the Bomb changed everything?

The answer can only be yes and no. Yes, nuclear war is qualitatively different from anything in the past. The danger is of a completely different dimension. And deterrence, resting on intercontinental missiles and nearly instantaneous responses, has turned many of the rules of warfare upside down.

At the same time, not all wars are nuclear. Consider the Falklands/Malvinas war, the Grenada invasion, Israel's several conflicts with surrounding states, Nicaragua's and El Savador's fights with their respective guerrilla insurgencies, the struggle between Afghans and Soviet invaders, and of course America's role, dominant or minor, in all these wars. Whether one condemns or justifies them, from one side or another, the conclusion turns very little, with the possible exception of the Middle East conflicts, on the nuclear dimension. In addition, there is the serious position, also given a certain legitimacy in the bishops' pastoral, particularly in regard to the defense of Europe, that conventional warfare remains the most morally viable alternative to nuclear holocaust. Finally, there is the fact that while the nature of weaponry may have changed so drastically as to negate many of the "lessons of the thirties," the typical operations of diplomacy and nation-states, of human nature even, remain depressingly constant, as pacifists themselves are quick to insist. While the moral lessons of the pre-World War II years cannot be applied unrevised to the nuclear age, they cannot be ignored either. The march of Nazi Germany to world war and Holocaust constitutes a kind of threshold case for thinking about the morality of peace and war. If moral positions do not stand up when tested against those realities, then it seems their proponents have a heavy burden of explaining why their positions should be compelling today.

Let me offer an obvious example. People suspicious of militarism often sneer at the Roman proverb, "If you wish peace, prepare for war." It is, they suggest, a kind of Orwellian inversion, used to justify the acquisition of arms which only render more likely (and more destructive) the war they were meant to prevent. Certainly there are examples to support this case. But it is also true that in the case of Hitler's adversaries, the wisdom of the proverb seems sustained; better war preparations—not necessarily more—would have forestalled the German onslaught or at least have contained it. It is also true that thinking clearly about those preparations was hampered by the suspicion with which not only pacifists but the non-pacifist left as well looked upon all things military. This one example should loom large enough to cast a giant question mark against the automatic hostility which many who consider themselves peacemakers feel and express toward any new proposal about weapons or strategy.



While reading a recent book on Christian mysticism by no less a master of the spiritual life than William Johnston, I was suddenly caught up by the sentence: "If there is a nuclear war (which God forbid) it will be fought *for money, for oil, for petrodollars*" (his italics). Is that actually true? And what about so many other claims regularly made in the religious press by peace activists: that war is caused by exploitation of the third world, by racism, by sexism, by mutual misunderstanding, by the military-industrial complex; that defense by military means is no longer possible; that the arms buildup or the aggressive actions of our adversary are primarily reactions to the fears we ourselves have induced; that until our nation has achieved justice at home it has no business intervening on behalf of justice overseas? The truth about these propositions is not simple. But it is at least chastening to know how many similar statements were made in the 1930s either to extenuate Nazi belligerence or to cast doubt on the legitimacy of any military response. To hear echoes of that unhappy time is not necessarily to abandon all such claims in regard to events today; it does force us to reflect, to be precise, and perhaps even humble, in our arguments.

What I have said, so far, only scratches the surface. For Christians the question of pacifism is intimately linked to the problem of evil, and what God reveals to us, in Jesus, about suffering, about death, about sacrifice, about resisting that evil. I do not see how we can seek understanding in this area without having in mind what is virtually the paradigm case of evil for our time and culture. The mystery of God on the cross, and in the camps . . . the silence of the Father while the Chosen One, and his Chosen Ones, meet their deaths . . . the riddle of our responsibility in a world, and for a world, over which we do not claim ultimate sovereignty—all these are terrible questions I do not presume to pursue. My only point is that the events preceding and during the war against Hitler are at the heart not only of a political and ethical examination of pacifism, but also of our theological understanding of it.

In a few weeks, many of those most concerned about peace will be drawing the nation's attention to the fortieth anniversaries of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They are right to do so. They are not right, however, to pass over the questions of conscience raised by the war against Hitler. Those questions do not encompass all that can be said about the morality of war in our time. But confronting them, it seems to me, is an essential admission ticket to the discussion. With the coming of nuclear weapons, Einstein wrote, everything changed "except man's thinking." Pacifists frequently quote that, imagining that it applies only to the normal thought patterns of politicians, diplomats, and military strategists. Remembering the prelude to the Second World War in Europe, we might justly ask whether it doesn't apply to pacifists as well.

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Trent Busch

The Jilting of Mary Brown

Telling the woman easily
and politely she could not sleep
in the barn, the last man nearly
burning it down, flipping
a cigarette into the straw.

Could tell she smoked, yellow
stains on her hands and in spite
of her shape would have to be firm.

As easily and politely
shot the short-barreled gun,
twice in the chest and the soft
pool of blood under the
porch light outside his door.

Prison then, child grown to
become prince of forlorn, her
not knowing why he would give

her no room, and the tall
father gone who would bring her
rich presents should she remain
true and raise her a kingdom
and scent it with myrrh.

Charlotte F. Otten

Untitled

A friend dreamed I had given birth.
At 58? What live again?
Sarah laughing at God's visitors,
Angels chasing wind,
Aborted fetal stone.

The oak outside my window
Tells the truth. The spruce trees lie.
I shall not bear a child as spruce
Bear snow to heaven, a sacrifice in white,
But like the bloody oak, marooning to the sky,
Delivering birth to earth,
I am now most alive
Because I die.

Joan Rohr Myers

Green Apples

It's city mornings
when buildings seem to crawl
through thick air
that you speak to yourself
of green apples:
fallen on thin grass in an orchard
they wait to be lifted,
to be pressed
like hard hearts
in the bowl of a hand;
they will hold their sweet secret
until only your face
can touch the clean juice,
can float in the fall of perfume.

Joan Rohr Myers

Fertility

It is now, when the whole jar
of humidity has been poured on me
like wet petals, and there is no question
of dryness anywhere, that I am most close
to everything alive: the wet breath
that links leaves and sky to my lungs
reaches deep inside my body and stirs
the silent seeds of all I hold dear;
and you, like the powerful muscle
we call heart, grow stronger within me.

Paul Petrie

Platonic Poem to a Young Girl Just Married

I wished to hold your face between my hands—
and feel the light stream through my fingers—warm,
ruddy, sweet—like light from a lantern's heart.

Now through the fingers of another man
your beauty moves—more passionate, more free—
and escapes—as through your own linked fingers
it must slip out, dissolve, turn dark, be gone.

Suns spend their giant powers on the night,
their fiery wattage dwindling into points;
and even the stones, trapped in unyielding forms,
long for the rain's downfalling, the hands of air.

Desire is a dying into air.
Love leads us out—out of our own strict forms
towards other forms that as we touch them melt,
ray out like suns and are lost—but whose rich light
falls backwards, shining, into the lantern's heart.

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Authority: the divided legacy

AVERY DULLES

IN HIS OPENING ADDRESS at Vatican II, John XXIII pointed out that there was "no lack of fallacious teaching" in the world of our day. The church, now as always, must oppose such errors, but different means may be appropriate today than in earlier times. Frequently in the past, said the pope, the church has condemned errors with the greatest severity. "Nowadays, however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than of severity." At the ecumenical council, the pope declared, "the church desires to show herself to be the loving mother of all, benign, patient, full of mercy and goodness," spreading everywhere "the fullness of Christian charity." Such charity could eradicate the seeds of discord. "Often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun."

Influenced no doubt by these words, Vatican II refrained from issuing any anathemas. The Decree on Ecumenism strove to speak favorably of the other Christian churches, as did the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions with regard to Judaism and the other faith-traditions. The Declaration on Religious Freedom disavowed religious coercion on the ground that the act of faith is essentially free. "Truth," it asserted, "can impose itself on the human mind only in virtue of its own truth, which wins over the mind with both gentleness and power" *(Dignitatis Humanae*, 1). The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World echoed the optimism of Pope John in assessing modern culture and the "signs of the times." From this and several other council documents it would be possible to piece together a solid declaration on human rights, based on the principles of the Gospel. The dignity of all Christians was likewise affirmed, since through baptism all participate in the priesthood of Christ. In the Constitution on the Church and elsewhere, the laity were invited to exercise responsible initiatives. All these assertions of Vatican II raised expectations that church authority, after the council, would be more widely distributed among the faithful and would be exercised with greater moderation.

In its direct statements on authority, however, the council can scarcely be said to have liberalized the official teaching. The decisive texts are contained in the third chapter of the Constitution on the Church, which must be read in the light of the official commentary, the "Prefatory Note of Explanation." In these passages the episcopacy is raised to a new pinnacle of power. Bishops are characterized as filling in an eminent and visible way "Christ's own role as Teacher, Shepherd, and High Priest" *(Lumen Gentium*, 21). Episcopal ordination is described as the highest grade of the sacrament of orders, imprinting a sacred character. The bishops as a college are seen as succeeding to the college of the apostles and hence as having supreme teaching and governing authority in the church.

The council proposed its exalted doctrine of episcopal authority without in any way detracting from the supreme authority of the pope, as previously defined at Vatican I. The pope was recognized as having by himself alone all the powers of all the other bishops taken together. Only he, moreover, could call the bishops to collegiate action. Without his participation or approval, no action by the college could have any force.

The doctrine of the council concerning the hierarchy re-

THE POPE has called for a synod next November to examine the state of church renewal two decades after Vatican II. In anticipation of that synod, *Commonweal* is publishing a series of articles focusing on issues which remain unsettled and sharply contested in today's church. The first article, Gregory Baum's reflection on "After Liberal Optimism, What?" appeared in the last issue (June 21). Future articles will touch on questions of Catholic identity, women and the church, current moral teaching, the life of prayer, and related themes. A number of distinguished thinkers have agreed to contribute their viewpoints. THE EDITORS

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sulted in a certain downgrading of other teachers in the church. Unlike the scholastic theology manuals, Vatican II made no allusion to the scholarly magisterium of theologians. Nor did the council make any mention of the consensus of theologians as an authentic source of Christian doctrine. The "sense of the faith" of the whole people of God was said to be unerring, but only when the faithful were in agreement with the bishops (*Lumen Gentium*, 12).

In its teaching on the magisterium, Vatican II emphasized that the hierarchy alone can authoritatively interpret the word of God, though the hierarchy stands under that word and serves it (*Dei Verbum*, 10). Catholics, according to the council, are obliged to accept in faith what the pope and bishops proclaim as a matter of faith. When the pope asserts a definite position by his ordinary magisterium without speaking *ex cathedra*, the faithful are obliged to assent sincerely as a matter of religious deference (*obsequium religiosum, Lumen Gentium*, 25).

These statements on religious authority stand in some tension with the series of texts, already mentioned, in which freedom and tolerance are emphasized. Although the council did allude to the possibility that doctrines might be poorly formulated (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6), it did not squarely face the question about the rights and duties of the Catholic who is conscientiously convinced that the official church has erred on a given point. Yet the problem was evident at the council itself. Many of the theological experts, such as Henri de Lubac, M.-D. Chenu, Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, and John Courtney Murray, had been in conflict with the Roman magisterium under Pius XII. The council abstained from reaffirming recent papal teaching on subjects such as monogenism, the primary end of marriage, the two sources of revelation, and the supernatural, thus reopening what had been regarded as closed questions. In effect, moreover, the council reversed the teaching of previous popes on the ecumenical movement, biblical criticism, religious freedom, and the values of modernization, to mention only a few obvious topics.

Because various statements and actions of the council point in different directions, the council has not been easy to implement. Paul VI (1963-78) strove loyally to implement it in an even-handed way. John Paul II, since 1978, has shown himself primarily concerned with reestablishing discipline and overcoming what he describes as the "disarray and division" left in the wake of the council. I shall here discuss the two pontificates under three main headings: primacy vs. collegiality; Catholic unity vs. regionalism; and doctrinal control vs. dissent. All three of these topics are aspects of the general question of authority in the church.

THE DOCTRINE OF COLLEGIALITY, as already mentioned, concentrated ecclesiastical power more than ever before in the bishops, including the pope as head of the college. As a result, the conception of an ecumenical council was modified. In patristic times such councils, though primarily made up of bishops, were convoked and approved by emperors. In the Middle Ages councils were composed of representatives of various classes in the Christian society, including bishops, abbots, theologians, and secular princes. Even the Code of 1917 still recognized the right of certain religious superiors who were not bishops to attend ecumenical councils as voting members. The 1983 Code, reflecting Vatican II, registers a slight but significant shift: "It is the right and duty of all and only the bishops who are members of the college of bishops to take part in an ecumenical council with deliberative vote." Non-bishops may not attend in any capacity unless invited to do so by the "supreme authority in the church" (canon 339).

THE MOST striking innovation connected with collegiality is perhaps the synod of bishops. In September 1965, just before the last session of the council, Paul VI set up this agency as a permanent body in which selected representatives of the whole episcopate (at least 85 percent of them elected by their episcopal conference) would occasionally meet to consider concerns of the universal church. It is noteworthy, however, that neither the pope nor the council, in instituting this synod, used the term "collegiality." The 1983 Code of Canon Law, accordingly, treats the synod as an advisory body to the pope, who has full authority to convoke it and set its agenda. The synod as such enjoys no deliberative powers, though the pope may give it a deliberative voice on a particular matter if he sees fit.

In spite of the hopes of some church reformers, Paul VI never allowed the doctrine of collegiality to restrict him in the free exercise of his primatial powers. In 1968 he issued on his own initiative a creedlike document, the "Credo of the People of God," which, though wholly positive in tenor, implicitly rejected various new theories on the virginity of Mary, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, original sin, purgatory, and other matters.

In his handling of priestly celibacy and of contraception, Paul VI, preferring not to act collegially, attempted to settle the issues by encyclicals written in 1967 and 1968 respectively. In the birth control encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, he rejected the majority recommendation of the advisory commission he himself had established.

John Paul II has continued to exercise the primacy in a highly personal style, utilizing the synod of bishops as a consultative organ or what he would call an "instrument of collegiality." Following the precedent set by Paul VI in 1974-75, John Paul II, after each of the last three synods, has issued an apostolic exhortation setting forth in his own words the outcome of the synod.

Since Vatican II, therefore, ecclesiastical authority, in the sense of juridical power, has been firmly lodged in the pope and the bishops, but especially in the pope, who makes use of the college of bishops at his own discretion. This papal-episcopal authority is absolute, not in the sense that it can do anything it pleases, but in the sense that there are no juridical restraints upon it. Authority in the sense of influence is of course much more widely distributed in the church.

At Vatican II there was much criticism of the "monolithic" church of the recent past, which had allegedly confused unity with uniformity. The council proposed a pluriform unity in

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which the natural endowments and customs of each cultural group would be fostered so as to make a greater contribution to the whole. It was hoped that, thanks to an "accommodated preaching of the Gospel," each nation might develop "the ability to express Christ's message in its own way" *(Gaudium et Spes*, 44).

To promote this regionalism the council recommended the establishment of national or regional conferences of bishops which were empowered, under certain circumstances, to make binding regulations. In a *motu proprio* of 1966, Paul VI decreed that countries or territories that did not yet have episcopal conferences should set them up as soon as possible.

The U.S. Bishops' Conference, like others, has been faced with the delicate task of mediating between the Holy See and the Catholic faithful in this country. The American bishops have been submissive to the doctrinal pronouncements of Rome but they have sought a measure of freedom in some practical matters. For instance, they lobbied in Rome for the retention of the American procedural norms in marriage cases, which have been to some extent salvaged in the new Code. With varying degrees of success, the American bishops have championed certain adaptations in the liturgy, such as Communion in the hand (which is permitted in many countries), the adoption of more inclusive language, the distribution of Communion under both kinds at regular Sunday parish liturgies, and several modifications of the Roman lectionary for North America.

The Bishops' Conference has in many ways become the true center of episcopal authority in this country. It has collectively spoken on numerous doctrinal and practical issues, such as moral norms (including sterilization and abortion), the principles for religious education, Mariology, Marxist Communism, national defense policies, and, currently, the economy. In drawing up the National Catechetical Directory and its collective pastorals, the conference has developed rather successful processes of consultation in which the advice of experts and the reactions of the faithful are taken into consideration. The bishops are groping their way toward an effective manner of speaking on public policy questions, neither so authoritative as to preclude responsible dissent nor so vague as to invite casual dismissal.

An ecclesiologically interesting byproduct of the collective pastorals on peace and the economy has been the letters on these topics composed by unofficial committees under the direction of laymen such as Michael Novak and William E. Simon. These letters, which on some points converge with, and on others diverge from, the episcopal teaching, have had considerable influence without juridical authority. The bishops have not suggested that such lay pastorals are out of order. Such initiatives may be seen as implementing the council's recommendation that the laity should courageously express their views on matters in which they enjoy competence *(Gaudium et Spes*, 62).

Rome has been wary of regionalism. Because of tensions between the Holy See and the conferences, Paul VI in 1969 convened an extraordinary synod to deal with the question, but no satisfactory solution was then achieved. At the synod of 1974 Paul VI warned that it would be "dangerous to speak of diversified theologies according to continents and cultures." Generally speaking, both he and John Paul II have been reserved with regard to inculturation. They have preferred to speak of the "evangelization of cultures," all of which need to be regenerated by encounter with the Gospel. Anxious to protect the liturgy as a sign of Catholic unity, Rome has been reluctant to authorize liturgical innovations on a regional basis.

Complaints have been made by theologians such as Henri de Lubac and curial officials such as Joseph Ratzinger to the effect that episcopal conferences can become sources of national particularism and divisiveness. The record shows that in the area of social doctrine, different conferences have at times made different applications, but such variations of accent may be seen as healthy and appropriate. Another objection is that the conferences tend to smother the initiative of individual bishops as pastors of their own dioceses. It will be for bishops to judge how far this charge is valid. From my contacts I have the impression that most bishops find the national conferences a major support. The individual bishop has little effective authority unless he works in close collaboration with the bishops of neighboring dioceses. If they pool their efforts, the bishops can have a more adequate staff and speak with greater unanimity. They must, however, be on guard against the dangers of bureaucratization and bland compromises.

John Paul II, in his public statements, has often encouraged bishops' conferences. For instance, speaking in Brazil in 1980, he said that such conferences are "a peculiar expression and a particularly appropriate organ of collegiality." In his 1984 Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance, he referred to episcopal conferences as organs of the church's "social magisterium."

Generally speaking, the development of episcopal confer-

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ences has been a fitting response to the regionalism authorized by Vatican II. The principle of subsidiarity would seem to require that problems affecting a particular nation or region should normally be handled at the level of the conference. Up to the present the conferences have enjoyed only a modicum of juridical authority, but some of their actions have been highly influential — for example, the documents of the Latin American general episcopal conferences of Medellín and Puebla.

DOCTRINAL VIGILANCE has long been a major concern of the papacy. Before Vatican II this function was the specialty of the Holy Office, a congregation that attracted much negative criticism at the council. Cardinal Frings, one of the council presidents, said at the second session: "Its procedures are out of harmony with modern times, are a source of harm to the faithful, and a scandal to those outside the church." The Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops called for many reforms in the curia. Two days before the close of the council, in December 1965, Paul VI changed the name of the Holy Office to "Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith" (CDF) and gave it the primarily positive mission of encouraging the development of sound doctrine. "Since charity excludes fear," he wrote, "we can now more effectively defend the faith by promoting doctrine." In 1969 Paul VI established an International Theological Commission to advise the CDF, and in 1971 he promulgated new procedures for the examination of doctrinal cases.

The CDF has issued a series of declarations to clarify Catholic doctrine on certain disputed points such as the Incarnation and the Trinity (1972), infallibility (1973), sexual ethics (1975), and the ordination of women (1976). Some of these statements have been appreciated as theologically incisive, whereas some others, such as the one on the ordination of women, have been subjects of controversy.

Under John Paul II the CDF has intensified its activity against doctrinally suspect authors. After the condemnation of his book, *Quand je dis Dieu*, Jacques Pohier, O.P., was forbidden in April 1979 to lecture or say Mass in public. In December 1979 Edward Schillebeeckx was interrogated in Rome about his *Jesus*, and in the same month Hans Küng was deprived of his mandate to teach as a Catholic theologian.

Since Joseph Ratzinger was brought to Rome as its prefect in November 1981, the CDF has redoubled its concern for orthodoxy. In 1982 it issued a rather negative evaluation of the Final Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. In September 1983 and June 1984 it rejected certain views of Schillebeeckx on the ministry. In the first months of 1984 the CDF required two American bishops to withdraw the imprimatur on books they had previously approved, and in a third case it made efforts to prevent the reprinting of an American book.

Since the middle of 1984 the CDF has concerned itself especially with Latin America. Its "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation," dated August 6, 1984, gave general admonitions on the dangers of Marxist contamination. Efforts were then made to get the Peruvian bishops to condemn Gustavo Gutiérrez. In the spring of 1985 the Brazilian Franciscan, Leonardo Boff, was subjected to hearings resulting in a "notification" of errors in one of his books, followed by his sentencing to an indefinite period of silence.

The Congregation for Religious, directed since April 1984 by Jérôme Hamer, O.P. (who was made a cardinal in May 1985), has closely seconded the CDF in its doctrinal vigilance. Hamer acted swiftly against the religious who had signed the so-called "abortion ad" in the *New York Times*, printed October 7, 1984. They were ordered to retract under threat of dismissal from the religious life.

Our narrative ends, therefore, very much where it began. The CDF under Ratzinger is not unlike the Holy Office under Ottaviani, except that it no longer functions as predictably as the neo-scholastic juridicism of earlier generations enabled it to do. There is little to prevent condemnations from depending on the personal theological views — or even, for that matter, the animosities — of a few highly placed individuals.

WAS JOHN XXIII deluded in imagining that errors tend to destroy themselves in the course of time? Was Vatican II mistaken in holding that truth wins over the mind of its own gentle power? Was Paul VI naive in imagining that faith can best be defended by the positive proposal of true doctrine? Taking advantage of the liberty gained by the council, some Catholics undoubtedly carried innovation and dissent to excess. The confusion of the post-conciliar period reminds us that severity as well as mercy may be in place and that strong structures of authority, such as the Catholic church has always possessed, may be needed to protect the integrity of revealed truth.

Coming into the Catholic communion in May 1985, Peter Cornell, former Vicar of St. Mary's in Oxford, pointed out the indispensability of having someone capable of declaring: "This is the faith of the church, no matter what Professor X or Y says it is." In these words he drew attention to a precious asset of Roman Catholicism, but he himself remarked on the existence of a disquieting "Holy Office syndrome." No one wants to return to the terror and repression of the anti-Modernist period. The freedom of responsible scholarship to probe into new areas must be protected. In countries such as the United States, with a strong legal tradition favoring the accused, many are scandalized by the procedures of the CDF.

The extraordinary synod of bishops in the fall of 1985 may find occasion to address this complex issue. Ways must be sought to protect the integrity of the faith without creating even the semblance of unfairness and repression. Where the self-correcting processes of theological debate do not suffice, the hierarchy may have to intervene, first of all on the local or regional level, always respecting the rights of the accused and the possibilities of meaningful appeal. Where the supreme authority of the church becomes involved, care must be taken to safeguard the principles of subsidiarity, legitimate diversity, and collegiality. These important contributions of Vatican II still retain their full validity and relevance.

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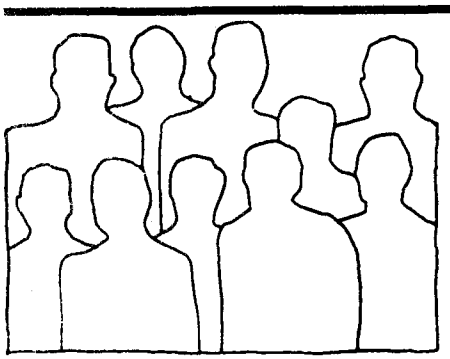

WHAT WE MUST LEARN FROM AIDS

Our fragile brothers

JIM NIECKARZ

MY FRIEND Arthur died of AIDS on October 23 last year. He was thirty-nine years old and had battled AIDS for four years. Very little was known about the disease at the time. At first I was sure a cure would be found and Arthur would be all right. Since then, I know that most AIDS patients die within two years of diagnosis. During the past four years I have visited fifteen AIDS patients in hospitals or in their homes, usually once a week. More than half of them have already died.

Arthur, to me, is not just another statistic, but a hero and a saint. He lived as full a life as he could, even in his last years. He worked as a volunteer in a clinic which treated gay men. Later he worked in a program which led to the development of a vaccine against hepatitis B. After he was diagnosed with AIDS, he learned everything there was to know about the disease. He participated in support groups, visited other AIDS patients, spoke in public forums, and never stopped reaching out to others. His life became a model of reconciliation — with his family and with God. Studying the Scriptures and liberation theology was part of the process.

When he and I first began to talk about the spiritual life and the relationship with God, Arthur said, "I still have a lot of anger against the church. It has prevented me from practicing my religion for a very long time. I see the church as my oppressor, as one who has rejected me as a person with human rights." He felt the church had contributed to the alienation he felt from some of his own family and from most people in society, simply because he was gay.

Arthur struggled to find a positive gay identity. He lived by choice in a gay subculture during his last few years. He explained that although many people criticize the gay and lesbian community, it is homophobia in society that encourages gay people to find refuge in a subculture in which they are accepted and can be themselves. He said, "If we don't organize to fight for our rights, who will help us in this current AIDS epidemic?" At the time this was true. To a great extent it remains so.

At first I didn't understand a lot of the things Arthur was telling me. I didn't want to. I was more comfortable dealing with Arthur as an isolated person. Little by little, however, the broader implications of the AIDS crisis and of gay rights began to become clear to me. Over and over Arthur stressed that the AIDS crisis was only a symptom, a reflection of the larger problem of society's failure to deal fairly and honestly with the problem of gay rights. The church was a large player in this failure. I began to see how denial, anonymity, and hiddenness complicate the ability of society to deal with gay rights, and the AIDS crisis in particular.

We talked about developments in the church, about scriptural and theological renewals that have both challenged and changed the church. In the area of sexual morality and ministry to lesbian and gay people, I had to admit there was little such change. But, I explained, the right questions were beginning to be asked, and the gradual emergence of new opinions was in itself good news. Tentative new explorations by moral theologians had begun. There was *The Church and the Homosexual* by John McNeill, S.J., and John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality,* but very little else. The most important realization among some theologians was that the church had no adequate sexual ethic which incorporated the best available information from psychology and the other social sciences.

Talking with Arthur, I began to realize how a "virtual conspiracy of silence" is morally reprehensible. Homosexuality had not been discussed by most traditional moralists. It was the sin "whose name could not be mentioned." Now AIDS was becoming the disease that could not be mentioned.

SOMETIME LATER, a priest asked me if I would visit an AIDS patient and bring him Communion. Carlos was much sicker than Arthur. He was weak and gaunt with Kaposi's sarcoma, a rare kind of cancer to which AIDS patients are susceptible. He could barely walk. By now I knew a great deal about AIDS. I was no longer afraid of contagion. I tried to be relaxed. Carlos remarked that he had once been visited by a priest who was obviously afraid of him. "He made me feel so uncomfortable that I asked him not to come back. He was not dealing with his own fear of death. Or he was just plain homophobic. Perhaps both."

During the next year, Arthur suffered a variety of illnesses. He was partially blinded, developed shingles, had liver complications, and other disabilities. At the same time, I visited

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Carlos more often. The priest who had first asked me to visit Carlos was sick himself. Within a few months, the priest had died of AIDS. (Even though I knew it was highly improbable that he had contracted the disease from a patient, the priest's death affected me deeply.) A sense of dread began nestling deep down inside me. AIDS was getting too close for comfort.

About the same time Arthur brought me to a support group for AIDS patients. I learned how society, and hospitals in particular, were dealing with AIDS. At that time (late 1982), there were stories of callousness and over-reaction. Some hospitals were extreme in their efforts to isolate patients. Some nurses had refused to care for AIDS patients. There were even instances of funeral directors who would not take the bodies of AIDS patients. There were stories of friends, lovers, and relatives abandoning people who came down with the disease. I had heard much of this before. Hearing it firsthand was somehow more shocking.

But there was good news as well. There were now support groups, and other services were being offered by the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC). Several members of the support group spoke of their struggle to maintain their sense of dignity and self-worth, and of a new openness to the spiritual life. Others spoke of the joy they experienced in sorting out priorities, and articulated satisfaction over finally coming to terms with themselves and their own fear of death. I occasionally felt a twinge of anxiety during these discussions. But I suppressed the feeling and tried not to identify it. I wanted to appear to be open and strong. I was there to be supportive to Arthur and to learn — not to deal with my own fears.

With three different organizations — GMHC, the AIDS Resource Center (ARC), and Dignity-NY, I offered to visit AIDS patients who wanted to see a priest. Arthur continued to be my teacher, my support system. I did not realize at the time how important Arthur's survival was to me. I relied on him for strength and information.

During the next two years I visited a dozen hospitals. I knew what to say and what to avoid. Toward the end of 1984, Arthur became very sick. He was hospitalized for the last time. I met his parents. They seemed non-judgmental but struggling for answers. During the wake and funeral they seemed to find some. They wrote me later:

> Spending that one week in New York with Arthur's friends and seeing the true friendship and love that each one had for one another made us better Christians in many ways. You are a missionary by being instrumental in bringing back those who have drifted away from the church. Thank you for being Arthur's good friend, and may God give you assistance in your work.

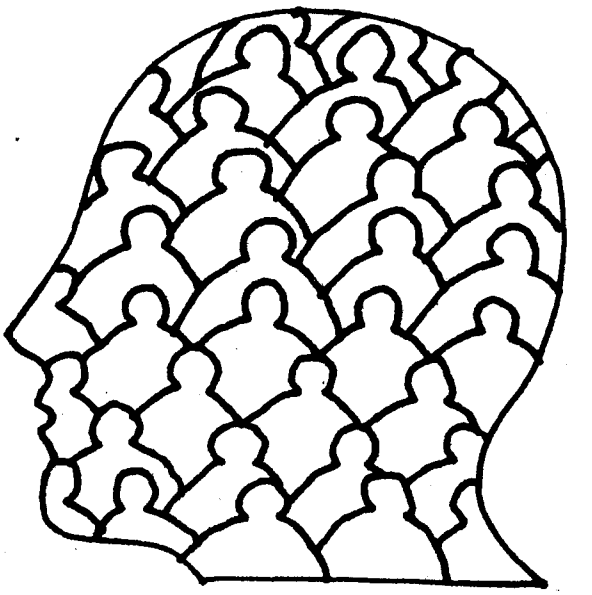
During the wake and funeral I did not cry. I wanted to "be there" for the family, lover, and friends, and not let my own emotions interfere. I met Jim, who told me he was in "the same boat" as Arthur and wanted to talk. We spoke several times after this. Within six weeks he was dead. His family was not so understanding. During the funeral, I struggled to reach them with an attitude of forgiveness and with words of comfort. I also tried to remain strong and in control. Though I was unaware of it, a storm of depression was slowly gathering around me.

In the last two months of 1984 there were several other funerals. I was aware of a certain anger and pain building up inside. Why were so many young people dying of this disease? Why was there still too little effort to solve the puzzle, too little money committed to research? Why was there so little understanding or sympathy for the patients, and so much of the "blame the victim" syndrome? Was it because most of the victims were intravenous drug users, Haitians, and gay men? I tried to steel myself against the growing sense of outrage, and the negative influences. I tried to be strong for those still battling. I tried, but I failed.

By the beginning of 1985 I could no longer cope. I was overwhelmed by the constant stress and the effort I was making to suppress something. I went out with a friend for a couple of drinks. It was enough to crack my whole defense system. I sobbed and heaved forth agonizing cries for hours. This was a turning point, and a dark night of despair.

During the next few weeks I made a more or less conscious effort to let my real feelings surface. I tried not to resist, channel, or change them. My experience with Taoism and Zen helped me. I finally recognized in the watching, in the unresolved grief and mourning, my anger against society and those institutions who were uncaring or damning. I recognized my resentment against the church which was offering little in the way of pastoral care and seemed more concerned with airing an antiquated moral theology which was contributing to the atmosphere of homophobia. I saw this was preventing society from responding to AIDS. All of these feelings and angers surfaced like old dinosaur bones from the tar pits. I recognized that mine were the same angers and fears as the AIDS patients' I had met.

But most of all, as I listened, and waited, I discovered my own fear of death and dying, my own fear of AIDS, my own fear of being labeled and tarred with the same brush, my own homophobia. I had been suppressing fear for over three years.



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Suddenly, when I was able to speak the monster's name, it began to melt away. The process is still unfinished, but I am aware of my feelings and fears at a more conscious level.

I have returned to the ministry of visiting AIDS patients. I am still learning from Arthur as I reflect on things he taught me. I am learning from the patients I am seeing now. I am no longer afraid to cry when I need to, or to share in the tears of a patient who needs to cry. I can take more freely from them, too. One of the patients I am seeing is a nurse with so much wisdom and wit I am sure I get more out of the visits than he does. I am less inclined to give glib comfort. Sometimes there is only silent presence, or the admission of a lack of answers or solutions.

I realize now there is fear all around me. It is in the gay community and the straight community. The fear and denial take many forms. There is self-destructive behavior, homophobia, anti-gay violence, anger of all kinds. There is fear in the church and among churchpeople.

There are a few priests and nuns now working with AIDS patients in association with organizations such as ARC and GMHC. There is the hospice program of Sr. Patrice Murphy at New York's St. Vincent's hospital. But there are many more who have not met the challenge. They fail to recognize the monster of their own fears.

Four years after first visiting Carlos, I visited Louis in his home. I asked if he had seen a priest in the hospital. He answered that a priest had come around: "He stuck his head in the door. When I saw he was a priest, I began to cry because I was hoping to reconcile myself with the church. But the priest did not understand my tears. He seemed to panic and began to repeat again and again, 'Don't cry, please don't cry.' I tried to explain, but he was not able to hear. He told me what time Mass was and left in a rush. I doubt I could have talked to him. He seemed to be afraid of me."

After I celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation, the sacrament of the sick, and the Eucharist with Louis, he began to weep. He said to me, "I am so happy — no, it is more than that, it is like pure joy." I cried for joy with him. I have learned so much from these courageous, weak people about my own weakness and courage. I have learned what it means to share joy and sorrow with another human being. During the past four years, I have learned about the defensiveness in the church, and about homophobia in straight and gay people.

As of this writing, over 11,000 cases of AIDS have been reported in the United States. Several thousand new cases are expected by the end of the year. The challenge is great, but appropriate responses on many levels could lead to the defeat of the disease. As we face this challenge, we must also deal with our own most basic fears: our own mortality, our own vulnerability. AIDS threatens our security. It challenges our prejudices, our narrow dogmatism, our inadequate sexual morality. The AIDS crisis invites us to be more compassionate, to practice that love which Jesus showed to Samaritans, lepers, and Roman soldiers. It challenges us to share the suffering of Jesus in the outcast. If we respond, it could lead to a greater degree of freedom for us all.

Stage

AIDS ON STAGE

ADVOCACY & OVATIONS

THEATER has been generally tired and tepid this year. Yet, more and more often in the last few months, audiences have been responding noisily, whooping their approval, rising to their feet to applaud curtain calls. This has happened even at such embarrassing offerings as *Grind* and the Tony travesty *Big River*. Perhaps the response is simply one of desperation, born of deep need and short memories that cannot recall theatrical quality. The standing ovations in two instances — at William M. Hoffman's *As Is* and Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* — grow out of much more complex responses. Neither work seems to me particularly distinguished as a play, but the enthusiastic and obviously moved audiences are not simply expressing their approval of the plays and the performances, which are fine in both cases. They are responding to the subject matter, showing their sympathy for the courage of AIDS victims offstage as well as on, and — particularly at *The Normal Heart* — their anger that more has not been done to discover the causes and stem the growth of so frightening a disease. Nor are these simply gay audiences responding to an epidemic that has hit the gay community hardest. The audiences are mixed; the response is not.

The curtain of ignorance that surrounds AIDS, the lack of information about how it is transmitted, and the presumption that the disease is necessarily fatal have created a climate of fear that has isolated many of the victims. Not only have health-care professionals turned their backs in some cases, but friends, lovers, acquaintances have abandoned the ill on the assumption that even casual contact can be dangerous. There have been many horror stories in the press and on television recounting this ostracizing process. As though to counteract such negation, both these plays, without ignoring the very real problem of AIDS-victim-as-pariah, seem designed to emphasize the supportive forces, professional and personal, that sometimes rally to the dying man. Both plays are about the acceptance of death, but although there are many similarities between them, they are very different in tone and intention.

In *As Is*, Hoffman uses a handful of performers. They step in and out of roles to give a sense of the gay community in its variety, to show the way in which AIDS alters the patterns of behavior, and to establish the hospital environment. A hospice worker voices the general remarks on the disease and reactions to it. This milieu is the frame for the central story, the account of one man's slow reconciliation to the fact of the disease and its consequences. The emotional center of the play is the relationship between the protagonist, a writer of great charm

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and wit, and his former lover, who takes him "as is" and gives him a context of warmth and affection in which to face his approaching death. In a subplot, the writer's straight brother puts aside his distrust of gayness and his terror of the disease to embrace the dying man. In a recent article in the *New York Times Magazine* [May 19], a volunteer with the Gay Men's Health Crisis deplored talk of AIDS as though it were a "gentle, Camille-like wasting away." *As Is* finds the equivalent of the Camille image. A curtain is discreetly drawn around the dying man, leaving him with the strengthening presences of lover and brother, and the hospice worker steps forward for the last positive note, her story about a flamboyant gay who wanted — a final declaration of life — to have his nails painted one last time. This upbeat ending for so painful a situation manages to infect *As Is* with the kind of sentimentality that so often mars plays like *The Shadow Box* which want seriously to assert the primacy of life even at the moment of death.

In the similar plot of *The Normal Heart*, it is the lover rather than the AIDS victim who is the protagonist. Ned Weeks, whose character is presumably based on the celebratedly cantankerous author of the play, is an abrasively aggressive young man whose manner is in part a defense against the vulnerablity implicit in personal commitment. His armor is penetrated by Felix, who brings him the comfort of a love more gratifying than a one-night stand and who proves — as does Ned's straight brother and a crippled woman doctor who is his ally in the fight against AIDS — that Ned is a reasonably sweet fellow to anyone who can ignore his manner. Ned's brother and doctor are witnesses to the deathbed marriage of Ned and Felix, Larry Kramer's most obvious use of *As Is* sentimentalism. Brad Davis plays Ned as a cross between a cheeky small boy and Savonarola.

The latter is an appropriate approach to Ned because *The Normal Heart* is as much agitprop and accusation as it is personal drama. Just before he dies, Felix tells Ned never to cease being angry. It is obvious that Ned's anger is political, an insistence that confrontation is the only possible way to achieve public acknowledgement of the epidemic and public support for the necessary research to overcome it. Ned's — and Kramer's — targets in the play are the news media (particularly the *New York Times*), which were so slow in recognizing the gravity of the situation; the government of New York City (particularly Mayor Koch), which has been parsimonious — compared to San Francisco, say — in its support; the National Institutes of Health and other federal authorities, which have been dilatory in providing research funds; and his fellows in the Gay Men's Health Crisis, who have refused to see confrontation as the only approach to gay action. The latter include those whom Ned sees keeping a low profile to protect their positions in straight society, and those, with whom he sympathizes, who see his cry for preventive celibacy as a withdrawal from the hard-won battle to make gayness an acceptable sexual alternative in a society which once completely disapproved it.

There are several problems with *The Normal Heart* as a play. It wants to support Ned's stance as the proper one; yet, it makes him so self-righteous in his crusade the credibility of his position is undermined dramatically. Although the play makes a legitimate complaint about the early coverage of AIDS, the disease has been written about at length in recent years, and Kramer almost smothers his play by dropping great chunks of now unnecessary information on its opening section. Although society's slowness to deal with the AIDS problem may legitimately be traced to a still strong if less vocal prejudice against gays, the rhetoric of accusation begins to get silly when the foot-draggers, from Mayor Koch to the members of the NIH committees, are presumed to be acting out of their fear of being found out as closet gays.

There are built-in dangers in plays that deal realistically with disease, and the flaws of both *As Is* and *The Normal Heart* may be those of the genre. To the enthusiastic audiences at *As Is* and *The Normal Heart*, the aesthetic weaknesses may be beside the point. For some of the playgoers, those weaknesses — the softness of *As Is*, the harshness of *The Normal Heart* — may be strengths.

GERALD WEALES

Screen

THE IMPULSE TO KILL

'SYLVIA' & 'PRIZZI'S HONOR'

SYLVIA documents the efforts of Sylvia Ashton-Warner, the New Zealand (and eventually British) educational reformer and artist whose success in stirring student creativity has had a strong, positive impact on modern education. Superbly directed by New Zealander Michael Firth, the film begins with a documentary prelude, where we see the real Ashton-Warner in her late sixties explaining how, as a beginning teacher, she wanted to "find in students the impulse to kill — to harness it." In the feature that follows, the young Ashton-Warner, played by the strangely beautiful Eleanor David, seeks to turn the fears and destructive anxieties of Maori children into creative expression. She explains that she wants to reach their "undermind" as a tool to lead them toward reading and writing. It's a powerful concept, powerfully portrayed.

Reaching children is the most important aspect of teaching today. Ashton-Warner emphasizes that, to do so, one must start with the children themselves, with what they already know and care about, with their roots and background, with what can intrigue or interest them — with what, in brief, is on *their* minds. In some ways, her notion is as old as Rousseau's *Emile*, in which teachers are taught to teach writing by stimulating the *desire* to write. But Ashton-Warner adds to this the concept of the teacher as artist, one who reveals the genuine potential of raw material. To her, education is genuinely what its Latin root specifies: a leading forth. It's an approach that distinguishes her from right-wing fogies bent on

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regimentation — and today, at least in higher education, from left-wing humanities professors with their sublime disdain for what an American adolescent could be expected to know or like.

When *Sylvia* sticks to the classroom, the film is magical, partly because of David's intense performance, Firth's directing, and the charm of a mixed group of New Zealand and Maori youth, whose innocence repeatedly steals the scene. The Maori lack that cultivated cuteness and nauseating precocity of children in American films; they are artless, shy, often silent, sometimes rather annoying, and spontaneously open. The best parts of the film involve Sylvia's attempts to tie that openness to books; appropriately, the children start the process on their own, one day adopting words that they find important, then inspiring their teacher with a method of assembling their words into stories. A fine concluding moment occurs when children and teacher place a Maori carving over the school gate to illustrate that this is *their* place of learning. Needless to say, the authorities don't approve — of either the symbol or the process.

The problem with *Sylvia* is that the film strays too far outside the classroom setting. Director Firth has aimed at a reasonable goal, a slice of three years of his subject's life. But the result is too diffuse, blurring the importance and drama of Sylvia's classroom achievements with tidbits of her home life, tentative adultery, tentative lesbianism, and some shorthand notes on New Zealand sociology. The rushed character of the narrative is all too evident when we are told offhandedly that the Second World War has been on for some time in Europe — though presumably not in the Pacific. With such slapdash attempts to include too much, *Sylvia* is typical of a certain category of foreign film that does everything but stick to the story. Fortunately, in this case at least, the story is strong enough to survive, and even inspire.

PRIZZI'S HONOR is curious: though filled with echoes, it lacks resonance. The film is a kind of comic *Godfather*, pushing the Mafia juxtaposition of family values and "Family" violence to farcically ironic extremes. It also imitates director John Huston's *film noir* masterpiece, *The Maltese Falcon*. In the new film, hit-man Charlie Partanna (Jack Nicholson) must eventually punish, on a point of honor, his beloved (Kathleen Turner), just as Humphrey Bogart sent Mary Astor "up the river" in the earlier movie. Huston is a master at plotting the relations of greed and irony (witness also *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*). In *Prizzi's Honor*, he also transfigures Partanna into Romeo. Despite all the parallels, however, one thing is missing, a representation of genuine humanity at the core of the plot.

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Prizzi's Honor is not merely imitative; it adds to evocations of past films an entirely new, and peculiarly twisted feminist element, embodied in the exotically voluptuous daughter of the director, Angelica Huston. Angelica plays Maerose Prizzi, whose broken engagement — four years before the action of the film begins — provides hidden unity to the story. *Prizzi's Honor* might better have been titled *Angelica's Revenge*, for it is finally her "honor" that secretly prevails over macho Sicilian definitions of the term. As Maerose, Angelica — with her elegant version of Cher's looks and a magnificent mimic Brooklynese — steals the romantic fire from Kathleen Turner, who, in one of the film's smaller surprises, is a Prizzi contract killer. One may take both female roles as John Huston's unsentimental comment on whether or not the world would be a less violent place if women ruled nations.

But Huston is so intent on debunking sentiment that he winds up impoverishing emotional content, which is quite another matter. This is most clear in his treatment of Nicholson's character, Partanna. Nicholson brings the hit-man to half-life, not just with perfect idiomatic Sicilian American, but with well-timed dumbo gestures and a pair of eyebrows arched to resemble a mini-Satan's. True to the film's irony, he is most convincing when slobbishly in love, at once both pathetically deep (compared to his normal state) and painfully superficial (compared to the rest of mankind).

But Nicholson's hit-man is never allowed to grow, or even to feel real conflict. Huston's main character is finally a puppet, and the satire, accordingly, skin deep. That is, although we recognize something of ourselves in the folksy ways of Mafia hoods when they make love, or pass cookies to grandchildren, or discuss interior decoration, we lose any sense of identity, or even relevance, when they lack any semblance of emotional depth. Nobody suffers too much pain in *Prizzi's Honor*, not in killing (with typical gangland sangfroid), not even in dying, which is approached in a casual, businesslike way. Worse, Nicholson suffers little pain over the eventual conflict between his Family and family, i.e., the woman he eventually marries. Huston probably intended Nicholson's lack of development as another anti-romantic gesture (even at its close, *Prizzi's Honor* raises hopes for change only to dash them). The director seems to dare us not to care, or even to snicker. But, from me at least, he won a shrug.

Prizzi's Honor lacks the depth of its analogs — the spirituality of *The Godfather*, when we watch Michael Corleone descend into the inferno of Mafia chiefdom; or the tragic tone of *The Maltese Falcon*, when Sam Spade discovers, albeit late, honor at the expense of eros. Huston would probably counter that his new film wasn't intended to echo their depth. On its own terms, however, it risks "the imitative fallacy" when it portrays empty people. Although we marvel at the tour-de-force of its intrigue, it feels, in the last analysis, like an empty work. Its superficiality is not profound, but, alas, superficial.

TOM O'BRIEN

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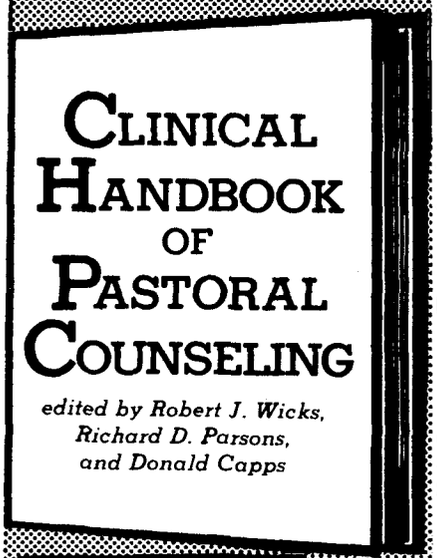

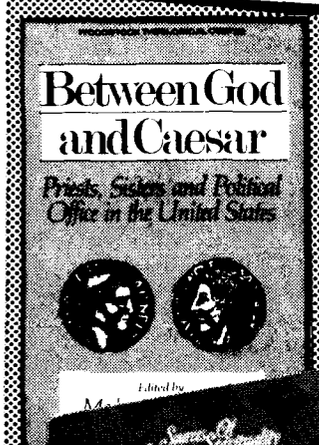

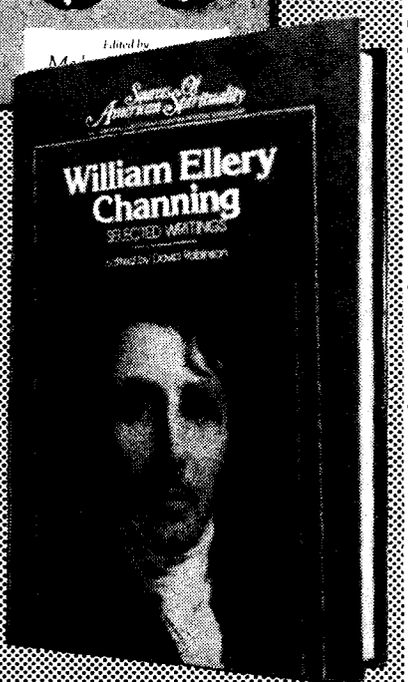

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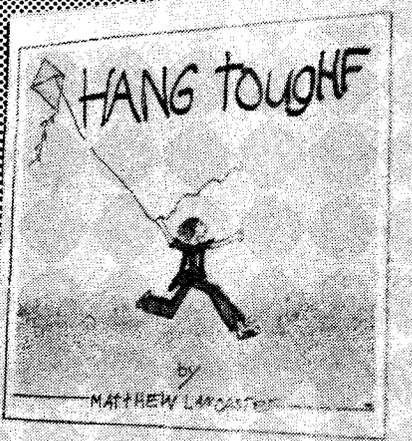

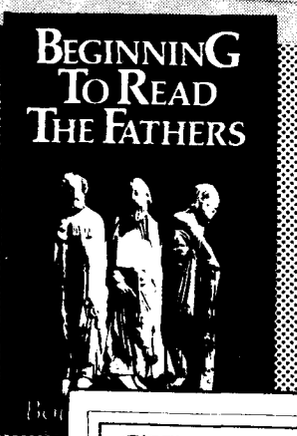

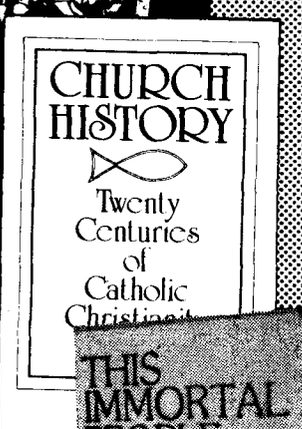

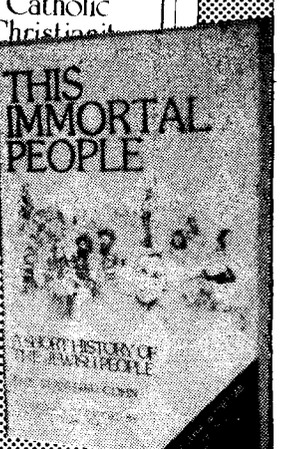

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Books: TRANSIENT FIXITIES

I think Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity – it should strike the Reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a Remembrance.

— Keats (in a letter, 1818)

WHAT Keats knew Seamus Heaney knows. His poetry surprises us into remembering at least three things easy to overlook in our mobile lives: how much we are creatures of place, how much we are defined by the objects around us, and just how much those fixities and definitions arise from the language of our lives. In his strongest poems he gives us all at once image and object and word. There is consistently such a palpable density to his language that the words themselves seem opaque; and yet, the objects or places he writes of convert themselves richly into meaning, into emotion, into relationships. In *Station Island*, his seventh book of poems, following hard on the publication of *Sweeney Astray*, a translation of that mythic Irish tale of a king, Heaney continues to surprise us with the poet's songs about the world around and within us, a world we "almost" remember.

There are three distinct sections to the new book. The title poem takes its shape from the Irish tradition of a penitent pilgrimage to Station Island, also known as St. Patrick's Purgatory. There are twelve poems, or "stations," here, and each discovers a dream-like confrontation with events and people — some literary — of Heaney's past. The effect is not unlike Dante's confrontations with the real figures of his own world; in several spots, in fact, Heaney directly invokes the *Commedia*. The book contains as well a cluster of new, less intrinsically bound poems, which prepare the reader, indirectly, for "Station Island"; and concludes with a group of songs written for a Sweeney-like sensibility (and voice) that finds itself in our world at our time. I shall speak briefly of each section.

STATION ISLAND

Seamus Heaney
Farrar, Straus and Giroux,
$11.95, 123 pp.

David Garrison

It is in the first group of lyrics, before the sustained "Station Island," that one finds the clearest, least complicated evocations of place, object, and word. The range of topic here is great — from a visit to Thomas Hardy's birthplace to a poem about a widgeon — but always the concern is the connection between the world, perception, and language. I can perhaps illustrate this best by quoting one short poem, "Old Smoothing Iron":

> Often I watched her lift it
> from where its compact wedge
> rode the back of the store
> like a tug at anchor.
>
> To test its heat by ear
> she spat in its iron face
> or held it up next her cheek
> to divine the stored danger.
>
> Soft thumps on the ironing board.
> Her dimpled angled elbow
> and intent stoop
> as she aimed the smoothing iron
>
> like a plane into linen,
> like the resentment of women.
> To work, her dumb lunge says,
> is to move a certain mass
>
> through a certain distance,
> is to pull your weight and feel
> exact and equal to it.
> Feel dragged upon. And buoyant.

I would like to say more, but, to invoke Keats again, the poem should speak for itself.

Those familiar with *Sweeney Astray* will welcome the new songs in the last section of the book, "Sweeney Redivivus." The seventh-century Ulster poet-king changed into a bird by the curse of St. Ronan flies again, this time in the spirit of the modern poet. The character of Sweeney appears throughout the book, but these last poems especially are the bird-man's songs, the lyrics of "a lookout posted and forgotten." They are a kind of litany of the poet's state, the difficulty, among many bird-poets, of making matter into song:

> The guttersnipe and the albatross
> gliding for days without a single
> wingbeat were equally beyond me.
>
> I yearned for the gannet's strike,
> the unbegrudging concentration
> of the heron.

These poems give us the poet in contemplation and separation, sorting through the facts of a world that reveals everything "astray," everything in need of penitence and preparation, especially the poet himself.

And it is precisely the search for such an appropriate act of penitence that leads the poet through the twelve eventually cleansing poems of "Station Island." Here indeed are the finest poems in a fine book. It is in these poems that Heaney confronts the ghosts inextricably part of his calling: Old William Carleton, who had written of his youthful pilgrimage (ca. 1820), and who advised the poet to "make sense of what comes./Remember everything and keep your head"; a prep-school master; a friend murdered by Protestant men whom he knew well, whom he recognized from his bedroom window; another friend, an archaeologist who died of illness at thirty-two — "familiar stone/had me half-numbed to face the thing alone"; the poet's own cousin, also murdered, who accuses him of a retreat into poetry: "you whitewashed ugliness and drew/the lovely blinds of the *Purgatorio*/and saccharined my death with morning dew." Through all of these and more the poet is drawn on, his purpose "to salvage everything, to re-envisage/the zenith and

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glimpsed jewels of any gift/mistakenly abased." His last confrontation is with James Joyce, one of the inevitable "old fathers" of contemporary Irish literature, of all literature in our age; and that great master of the ways of words urges the pilgrim-poet on:

> Your obligation
> is not discharged by any common rite.
> What you must do must be done on your own
>
> so get back in harness. The main thing is to write
> for the joy of it.

As the long poem and the pilgrimage come to an end we have the sense of a strong young poet led as far as possible by penitence and preparation. As Heaney separates from Joyce, we are purposefully reminded of Dante's separation from Virgil, the younger poet to be led on now only by the enviable — and inevitable — hope of sunlight.

Keats at one point in his brief career worked up the nerve to ask in a letter if perhaps the spirit presiding over his quickly maturing verse might be Shakespeare's; over and around the continually wonderful poetry of Seamus Heaney preside equally powerful masters of language — Dante, Joyce, Yeats, and many others. And yet the poet's voice has begun to rise of its own, and to find, like his masters', his own songs and his own visions. The whole is a gift to and a love of language.

A victim of reform

THE POLITICS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

William A. Donohue
Transaction Books, $29.95, $14.95 paper, 390 pp.

Fred Siegel

THERE is little doubt that America is a fairer place than it was twenty-five years ago, and that the change is due in no small measure to the American Civil Liberties Union. Racial equality before the law is the most obvious improvement, but the nation has also benefited from restraints on police brutality, the extension of free speech, and the expansion of procedural rights through our public and sometimes even private institutions. The rights of the press, of blacks, and of women have been secured in a manner that was once inconceivable.

In like fashion one party, the Democrats, has revised its procedural rules through a series of fairness commissions, although the results have been mixed. To paraphrase George McGovern, in 1972 the Democrats changed the rules to open the doors of the Democratic Party and people jumped out the windows in droves.

Unfortunately, something similar has happened to our public institutions; the schools and the police, for instance, have been procedurally cleansed by judicial reformers only to have the people who can afford it desert them *en masse*. Private schools and private police now abound. The liberal reform of these institutions has served, in some perverse fashion, to both heighten inequalities and diminish popular faith in public life. The new hero of our national morality play is the figure from our pre-New Deal past, the private sector entrepreneur. The reason, says William Donohue in *The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union*, is that the ACLU (and by extension American liberalism more generally) has been a victim of both the 1960s and its own successes.

Donohue's book is marred by a labored effort to prove the obvious, Yes, ritual denials to the contrary, the ACLU is a left-liberal organization. *The Politics of the ACLU* is weighted down by a dated attempt to pin that left-liberalism on a neo-conservative "new class" analysis. In case Donohue hasn't noticed, the "new class" that so frightened neo-conservatives has been redubbed the Yuppies and it's starting to vote Republican.

Where the book succeeds, sometimes brilliantly, is as a critique not only of the ACLU but of the radical individualist tendencies that have defined American liberalism over the past fifteen years. Liberalism had traditionally balanced a majoritarian sense of the popular will — for FDR the New Deal government was the collective energies of the people mobilized for common ends — and a concern for minority rights (in the case of blacks not always honored). The tension broke down in the late sixties in what can be best described as a revolt against the masses over civil rights and Vietnam. The sixties analysis which described America as latently totalitarian took hold in the ACLU. The Union's legal director Melvin Wulf warned of incipient fascism.

Unable to distinguish between the merely bad and the apocalyptic, beginning in the late sixties the ACLU tended to resist all moral judgments against the individual with counter charges against "crypto-fascist" American society. Customary norms, state enforced or not, were undifferentiatedly depicted as a bell jar descending over a smothered individual. The ACLU saw the thin wedge of totalitarianism everywhere. Does the state of New York, acting on majority sentiment, want a law to prohibit use of children in depictions of sexual activity? The ACLU objects. It sees the law as a threat to freedom of speech. Does Pennsylvania want a five-year mandatory minimum prison sentence for felons convicted of violent crimes with a firearm? The ACLU objects. Criminals, it says, almost no matter how violent, ought to be placed on probation and reintegrated into society. Do schools want to discipline disruptive students? No says the ACLU, students must be "permitted to act in ways which are predictably unwise." Freedom from overwhelms freedom to.

In its blinkered pursuit of a legal version of scriptural literalism the ACLU has had little to say in recent years about the victims of crime or school disruption. After all there is nothing specifically in the Bill of Rights about victims. Being at odds with the realities of everyday life is both its shame and badge of pride. Basking in the afterglow of the tradition-

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shattering civil rights movement, it exults in a Cartesian contempt for customary truths. The tragedy of its recent successes is that, as Nicholas von Hoffman has put it, "the ACLU has so stretched and distorted our definition of 'rights' that they are beginning to look to many people like wrongs. . . . The ironic triumph of the ACLU's activities has been to convince millions of people that civil liberties leave them helpless and naked against any and every sort of malefactor." And citizens fearful of crime, von Hoffman might have added, are clay waiting for the conservative potter.

The ACLU has pushed bourgeois civil liberties to their limits without simultaneously demanding bourgeois self-restraint. As a former ACLU national board member told me recently, "It's my job to worry about freedom, order is a matter for the police." This Manichean division leaves no room for the informal sense of community and its concomitant emotion of shame, which can leave people both freer and safer than an ACLUized world in which individuals who are not explicitly protected by the law are therefore vulnerable. The paradoxical effect of legal formalism is to heighten the importance of the very power the ACLU is sworn to defend against, that is police power.

From the early seventies on, in a reversal of its earlier stance, the ACLU has emphasized economic equality as a precondition for legal equality. But "the unremitting assault on norms of community — in the name of liberty" undercuts, says Donohue, this new ACLU concern. Is it plausible to promote an unfettered individualism on all social and cultural matters and then expect people to band together to honor economic equality? The ACLU cannot expect to both delegitimate the state as the singular source of repression and then authorize it to promote social justice.

William Donohue's *Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union* will no doubt be dismissed by doctrinaire liberals, but it deserves to be carefully read. In writing about the self-deceptions of the ACLU he has illuminated the broader dilemmas of an American liberalism which needs to reconsider some of its most basic assumptions.

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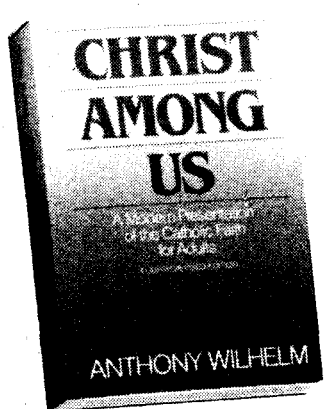

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DECARCERATION
COMMUNITY TREATMENT AND THE DEVIANT—A RADICAL VIEW
Andrew Scull
Rutgers University, $30, $12 paper, 234 pp.

Jean Bethke Elshtain

DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION has failed: that is the currently reigning view, one pronounced by professional groups such as the American Psychiatric Association and journals of political opinion, including *The New Republic* and *In These Times*. One might, in fact, make the case that deinstitutionalization was never seriously tried. In an article in *The Nation* several years ago ("A Key to Unlock the Asylum?" May 16, 1981), I argued that in order for deinstitutionalization to work a whole range of locally-based, decently-funded social services was necessary. This would include special education programs for developmentally disabled individuals, medical and dental care, vocational training, community-based group homes and residences, transportation allowances, adoption services for hard-to-place children, and so on. "It is clear," I stated, "that current deinstitutionalization efforts, even the best, come nowhere close to this vision."

Now, four years later, pronouncements on deinstitutionalization need not be hedged nor couched about with "if's": everyone acknowledges the disaster. The questions are: what happened, why, and what is to be done? The proportions of the dilemma become clearer every day. In a recent piece for *In These Times* (Jan 23-29, 1985), Joan Walsh noted that an estimated 25 to 33 percent of homeless shelter-users in major cities "have been psychiatrically hospitalized at least once." Ironically, some former psychiatric hospitals, re-opened as shelters, number among their regular homeless many former patients — or inmates — of the building when it was an asylum, not a shelter.

The plight of the homeless and occasional tragedies involving the marginally enhoused, push the too-often invisible discards of our driven, achievement-oriented culture to the forefront of our attention and, often fleetingly, our consciences. Last year, for example, a rooming house in Beverly, Massachusetts, burned down. Fourteen people were killed, eight of them Department of Mental Health clients and former patients in state mental hospitals. *The Boston Globe* (July 6, 1984) reported that among 11,181 mental health department clients living in 3,436 sites throughout the state, 1,565 were living in 612 rooming houses. Rooming houses, if well-tended and safe, are preferable to large warehouses. But all too often they are firetraps, ill-heated, dirty, and cramped. It is not unusual for upwards of one hundred people to be packed into struc-

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tures intended originally for half that number. According to the *Globe*, about 2,000 patients remain in seven state hospitals, with another 100,000 receiving outpatient services. Those who fall through the net completely wind up on the streets.

The timing is right for a revised and up-dated version of Andrew Scull's *Decarceration*. Scull, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania, published his work originally in 1977. His "radical view" played a role in the then-raging debates on deinstitutionalization. At the time its advocates dominated the discussion in the United States. Scull took a more cautious view, showing the promise of cost savings behind many of the upbeat paeans to patient freedom. Now, as Scull notes, "the situation has changed rather markedly." Looking back on eight years of experimentation with deinstitutionalization and in light of his earlier arguments, Scull engages in a lively reassessment of his work. Some of the changes are important; others involve partial qualifications and retractions.

Noting the "profound disjuncture" between "the myth and reality of 'community care,' " Scull tells a dismal tale. He details the ways in which the usual predators moved in to cash in on deinstitutionalization as the emphasis shifted away from small, family-run houses "towards larger, more heavily capitalized units." The smaller operations at least offered the possibility of providing low-income people with some additional money as "service providers" even as they performed a genuine service. Larger units are "clear-cut business enterprises requiring substantial amounts of capital investment" and "are highly concerned with costs and profits." The deinstitutionalized person, whether mentally ill or "criminal," rather than basking in a promised "freedom" and the more intimate relations of community care, often find themselves a group of atomized and debilitated "consumers" sent into a "hostile community and left to cope as best they can — in the virtual absence of state-supported aftercare or follow-up services."

Reviewing his original explanatory framework in light of developments in "the mental health sector over the past eight or nine years," Scull sees an "extension and intensification of the trends already visible in the mid-seventies, rather than any substantial modification or change of directions." But he now believes that his original arguments concerning the emergence of deinstitutionalization were too deterministic, locating the emphasis almost wholly in the fiscal crisis of welfare capitalism. It turns out that comparative data does not support this thesis as a uniform explanation. It is better, therefore, to see the fiscal crisis of the state as one among several powerful structural forces pushing towards deinstitutionalization. As well, a "medical explanation" — that the increase in sophisticated psychotropic drugs inexorably compelled out-patient care — is not universally valid. Drugs, Scull insists, played a secondary role, helping to persuade physicians of the feasibility of community treatment though drugs did not of themselves create the pressure for such treatment.

The most important change Scull notes since 1977 is the enhanced "net of control" over "deviants" which has been flung wider and drawn more taut. Non-intervention, he argues, "dressed up as community treatment and promoted in the name of the very virtues once attributed to the asylum, can be advocated on the grounds of its advantages to the client." So the lines between punishment and therapy get blurred, creating a maze of "supervised release schemes, halfway houses, community correctional centers, group homes, foster homes, pre-trial release centers, deferred sentencing agencies, and the like" — a baroque bureau-

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REVIEWERS

DAVID GARRISON *is writing a dissertation on the poetic process of Keats and Coleridge.*

FRED SIEGEL, *author of* Troubled Journey: From Pearl Harbor to Ronald Reagan, *is working on a study of the collapse of American liberalism.*

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, *associate professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts, is the author of* Public Man, Private Woman.

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cratic apparatus that *disguises* its controlling aspects or legitimates them in terms of "diagnoses and treatment rather than rules, responsibilities, and punishment."

This thesis, most powerfully advanced in the writings of Michel Foucault, alerts us to control in the name of care and greater freedom. At this time, Scull concludes, the state is "more likely to intrude into the emotions, thought, and behavior of the indivdual" than ever before, concerning itself with "generalized behavioral problems rather than specific acts." We wind up with the worst of both worlds: a precipitous increase in our prison population and the number of violent offenders together with a proliferation of non-institutional forms of punishment/treatment. Violent and dangerous criminals may be released, given the push towards plea-bargaining and early probation, and many who are simply marginal find themselves tangled in a web of disciplinary procedures.

Finally, neither institutional treatment nor community care offer panaceas but both, Scull warns, if inadequately funded, "provide ample opportunity for, and plenty of concrete examples of, squalor, neglect, abuse, and inhumanity." To be free means to be neglected. I wonder about the clause "if inadequately funded." Scull hints that adequate funding may be the, or a, solution. This seems to me not the case — not so long as we continue to construe the mentally ill and the criminal as "deviants," as the marginalized. As a radical sociologist, Scull should be sensitive to the ways in which language structures refer to "the deviant." Categorized as other by our language, we will always find ways to reduce those we fear or cannot understand to a sub-human status that guarantees their social and economic marginality just as our language legitimates and structures their "deviance" in the first place.

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Correspondence

(Continued from page 386)

the arena of *private* devotions. Was it not at Mass that one said the rosary and other prayers privately and silently before God? Devotional practices, such as novenas and Benediction, on the other hand, provided the real arena for community prayer, and despite their shortcomings, devotional hymns forged a spirit and sense of community long absent from the official liturgy. I think Day is a bit too harsh in his reading of the devotional material and history.

I also think the professor has been unfair in focusing his critical attention on early compositions of the "contemporary" genre, many of which are no longer even used because of their textual inadequacy or passé quality. To focus on texts such as "They'll Know We Are Christians" and "Whatsoever You Do" as characteristic of contemporary hymnody is a little akin to parents who keep speaking of their children as infants long after they have grown into adulthood. It seems far too early to rule out of order a whole genre of liturgical hymnody simply because some very early examples are weak either textually, musically, or both. Contemporary composers have done a great service in enabling Catholic people to once again reclaim the communal dimensions of worship through song. While one may quibble about particular texts or melodies, it should be noted that contemporary compositions are primarily designed for active, congregational participation and not for performance. This, I would assert, is their main contribution to liturgical renewal in our generation.

Day objects to texts which use the first person singular pronoun. Yet, even a cursory glance at the Scriptures, especially the Psalms, will reveal that such use of personal language is close to the heart of our biblical heritage. What keeps the biblical writers from falling into solipsisms and spiritual privatizations is not the use of particular pronouns but the context of their use. The Hebrew Scriptures, in particular, have a pronounced sense that the individual is never isolated but forever in covenant relationship with God and the other members of the covenant community. This, it seems to me, is at least a starting point for responding to the issue raised by Day. Liturgical hymns, be they of the St. Louis Jesuits, Isaac Watts, or Ambrose of Milan, are only partially dependent on their texts for their meaning. Meaning is also derived from context. If hymns are heartfeltly sung by congregations, if texts direct us to God as members of God's covenant community, if they open believers to each other rather than close them off in isolated cells, then are they guilty of the charges Day brings against them?

On the one hand, Day attacks contemporary texts, on the other he is inveighing against the churches and people who pray with these texts. Thus, underlying a rather serious article is a tone of ridicule directed not only at the texts but at the

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communities who employ them. "Indeed," he writes, "what we have is music for the trained soloist or group — those warm, wonderful people who are always conspicuously displayed up front, thriving on attention." Lines such as these not only undercut what could have been a serious critique of contemporary hymnody, but also veil a hostility which goes well beyond textual criticism. What saddens the reader at this point is not that Day is critical of certain liturgical texts, but that he appears so estranged from and hostile to a different style of worship. He accuses the "Kitsch revival" of snobbery and elitism. Has Day really avoided this in his own thought?

KEN MELTZ

No wishing it away

Villanova, Pa.

To the Editors: The comments by Richard J. Krickus [May 31] on my article entitled "Yuri's Usurpers" [March 22] are both thoughtful and thought-provoking. We apparently agree that the goal of military superiority over the USSR is illusory. And yes, the search for arms control may well be accompanied by confrontation and crisis in other arenas. But while acknowledging essential "philosophical and political" differences between the Soviet system and ours, I am inclined to see national security interests and not ideology as the primary factor motivating Soviet behavior. To think that competition between the Soviet Union and the United States would disappear if the two sides were more ideologically homogeneous ignores the evaluation of polycentrism in both East and West (especially the relations between Communist Russia and Communist China). The real "flight from reality" which the writer mentions is to be found among those who think that international peace would result if only the Soviet Union weren't Communist.

JEFFREY W. HAHN

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

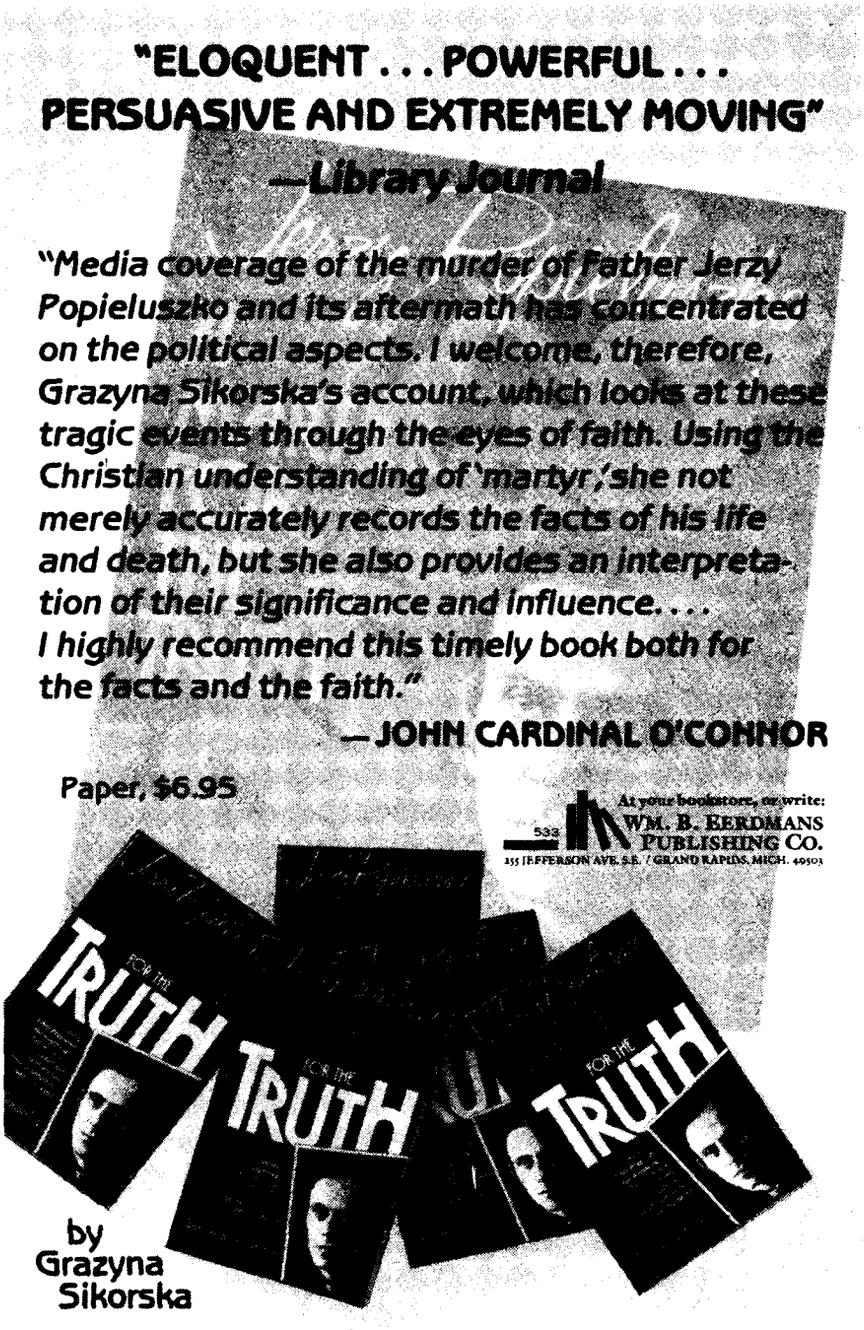
Action from below

Philadelphia, Pa.

To the Editors: Indeed, "Boff is onto something big," when, as you write ["The Natural Font of Authority," May 3], he argues for a "major decentralized reconstruction of church order."

This devoutly to be wished consummation will not occur without massive action "from below" in the church. Happily, as of 1980, an organization exists that is dedicated to struggling for such a goal. It is ARCC — the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church — and it lists on its board some of the best-known names in American Catholicism, names like Gerard Sloyan, Teresa Kane, Sidney Callahan, Denis Geaney, James Coriden, et al. Should your readers desire more information about ARCC, they should write to P.O. Box 3932, Philadelphia, Pa., 19146.

(REV.) PATRICK CONNOR, S.V.D.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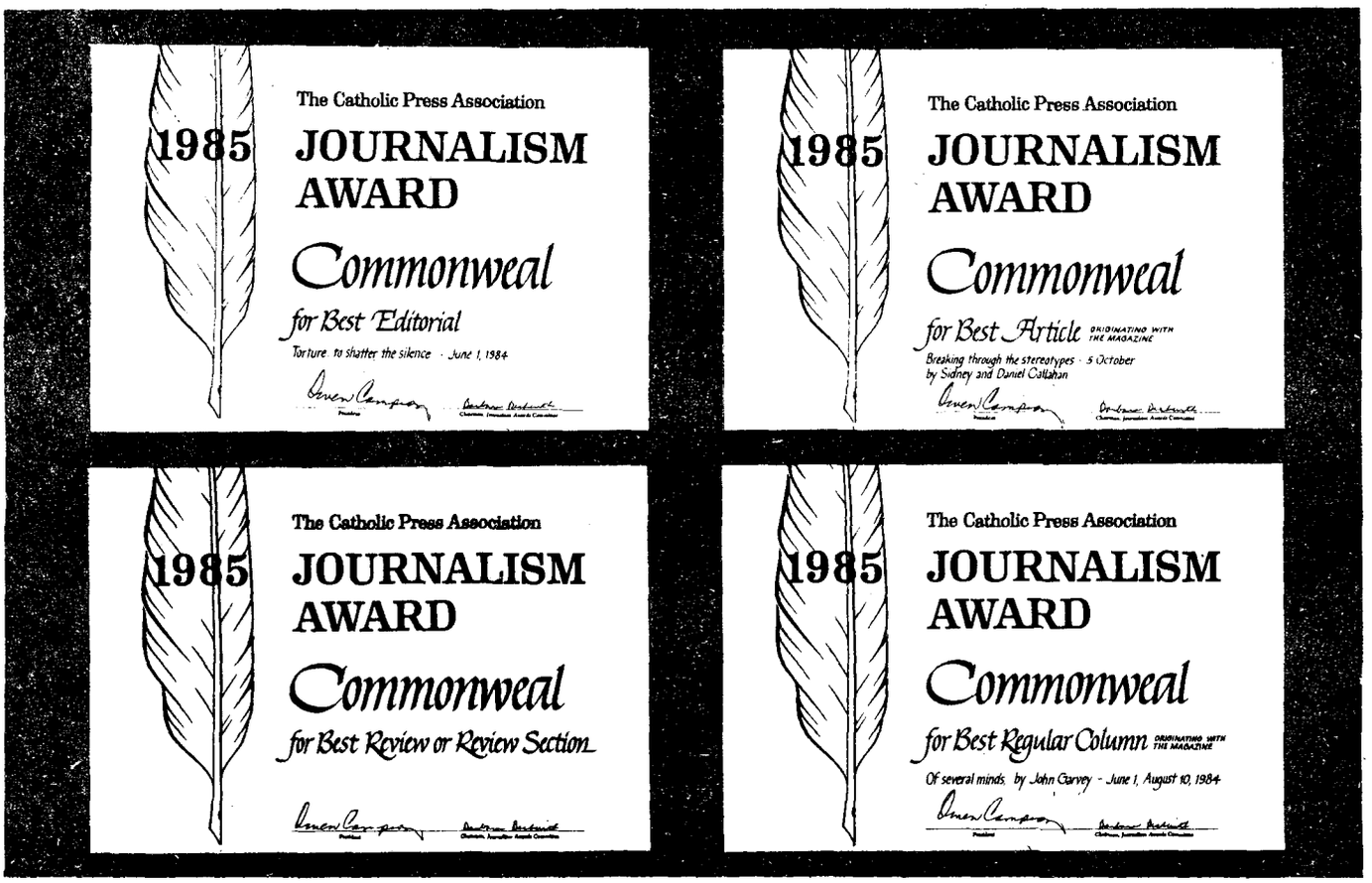

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